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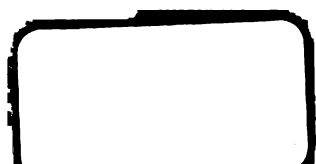
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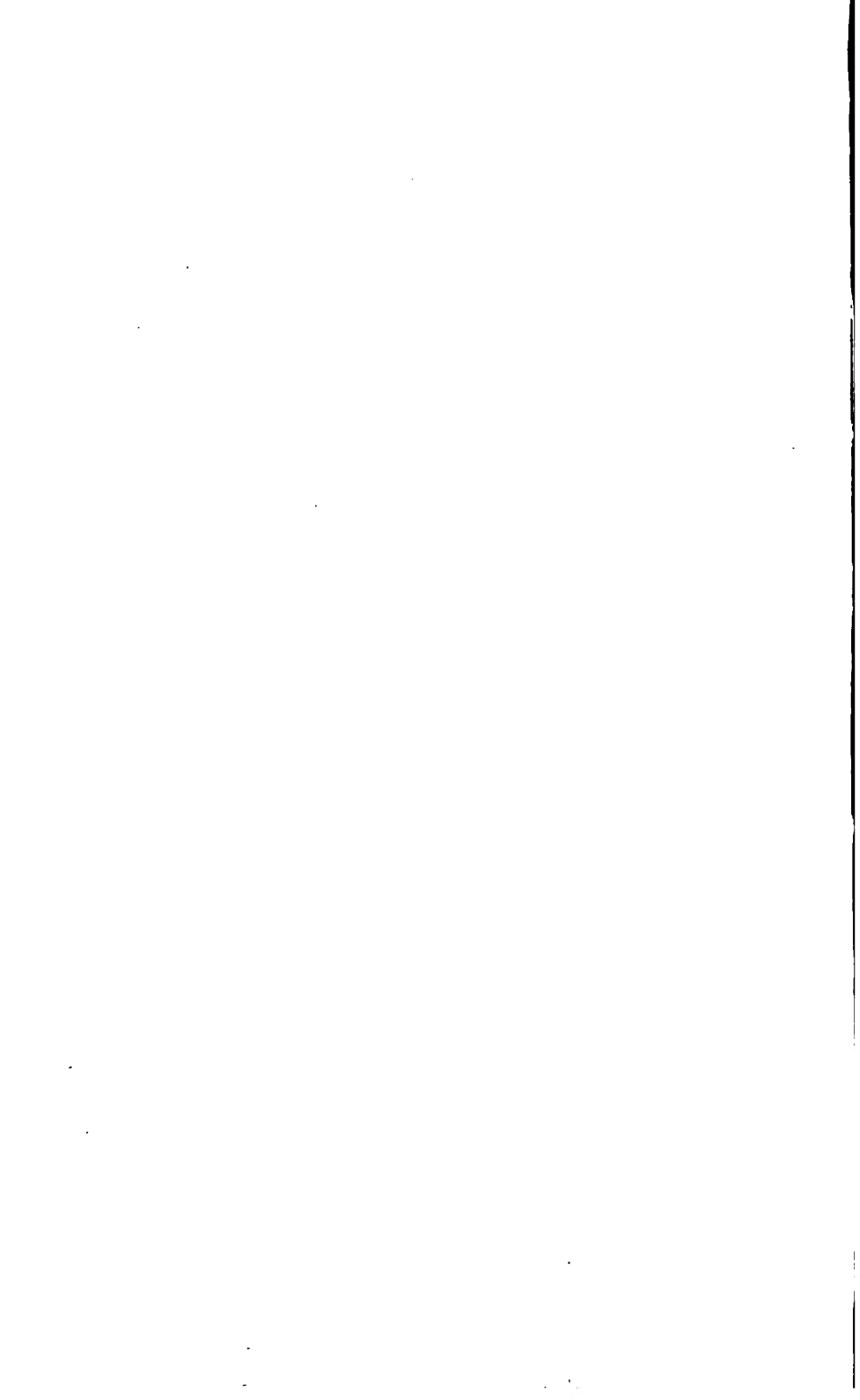
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THE
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UNDER
THE BOURBONS.

VOL. III.

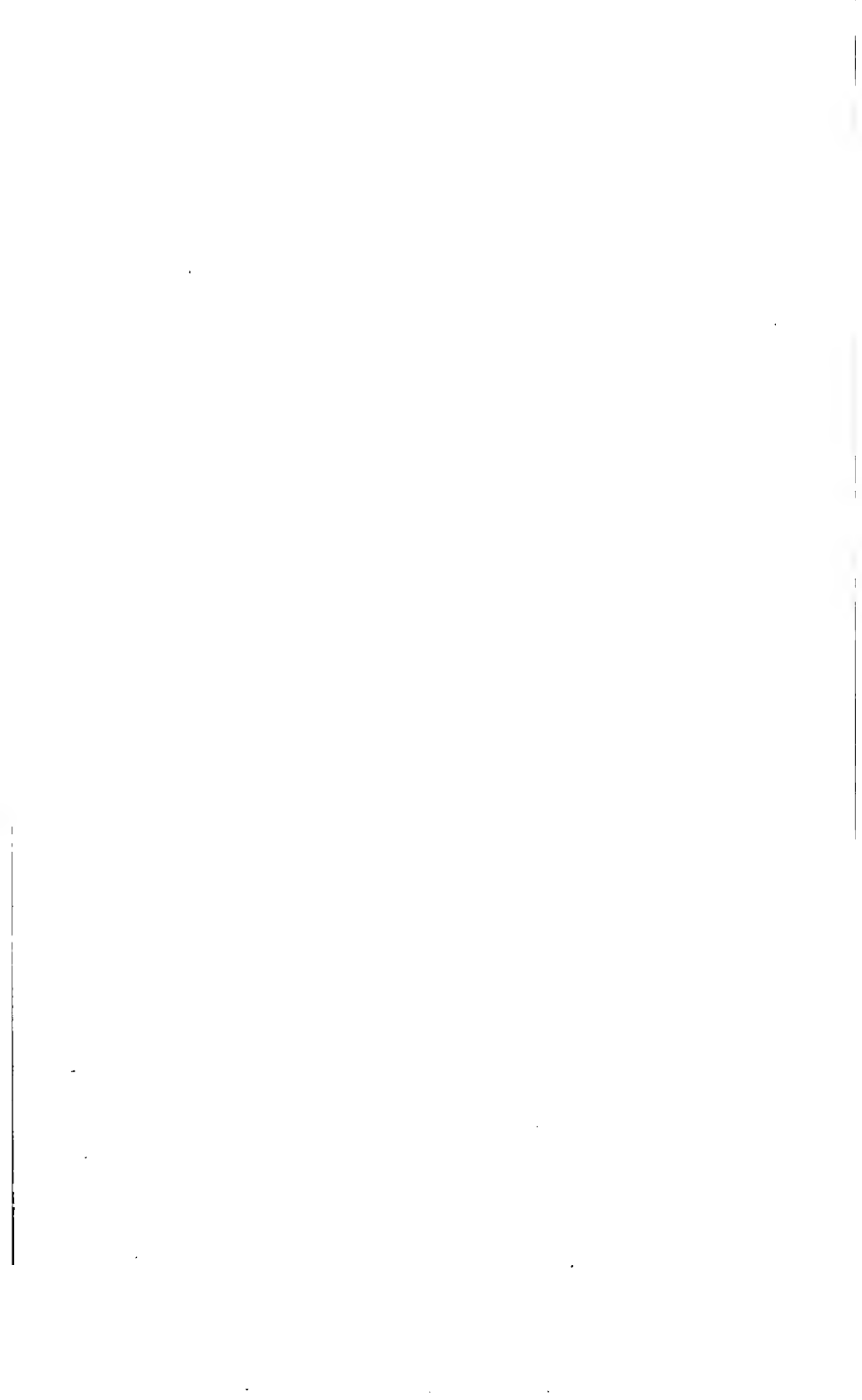
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THE
HISTORY OF FRANCE
UNDER
THE BOURBONS.

VOL. III.

1800
DE



THE
HISTORY OF FRANCE

UNDER
THE BOURBONS.

A.D. 1589—1830.

BY
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VOL. III.

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IN the former volumes the authorities quoted, *Mémoires de Sully, de Retz, de Motteville, &c. &c.*, had been so long before the public that there seemed no occasion to do more than to mention their names in the notes. And the same observation will apply to the earlier portion of these volumes. But as the two most important publications which are referred to in the narrative of the reign of Louis XVI. are of very recent date, it may be advisable to mention that the volumes edited by M. Feuillet de Conches consist of letters from the King and Queen, Madame Elizabeth, Monsieur de Mercy the Austrian ambassador, and others, which have only very lately been brought to light; and that "*L'Histoire de la Terreur*," by M. Mortimer Ternaux, which is not yet completed, is based on an examination of the municipal archives, and other public documents, which had, I believe, been seen by no one till the present government permitted him to investigate them.

The two publications, as might be expected, throw a great deal of wholly new light on all the earlier steps of the Revolution; and on the feelings and views and characters of the Royal family.

I should add that through an inadvertence which was not discovered till it was too late to remedy it, the letters referred to have been quoted in the notes under different titles ; sometimes being described as " Louis XVI., Marie Antoinette," &c. (the title given to the publication by the editor); sometimes as " Marie Antoinette," &c. ; sometimes as the " Collection of M. Feuillet de Conches."

C. D. Y.

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THE HISTORY OF FRANCE UNDER THE BOURBONS.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE prince who now succeeded to the throne under the title of Louis XV., was a child of between five and six years of age. Both his parents were dead ; and consequently, while a Regency was indispensable, the question who the Regent should be was manifestly open to dispute. As we have seen before, there was no law which laid down a rule on the subject, and all the most recent precedents went to establish the right of the sovereign's mother. But in the present instance there was no such person, nor any member of the royal family of so near and authoritative a degree of relationship as to claim an incontestable right to supply her place. The young king's sole uncle was Philip, King of Spain ; and when he renounced his right to the French throne, it was plain that he equally repudiated all possible claim to the exercise of a delegated authority. The late king, following in this the example of his immediate predecessors, had taken upon himself to regulate the government during the impending minority ; but he was perfectly aware that arrangements so made had never been held valid ; and, in the

very act of signing the will which contained these regulations, he expressed his conviction that they would not be allowed the slightest weight.* Yet, if this was really his belief, it would almost seem that, in framing such a document, he must have deliberately and needlessly intended to create troubles for the new reign by setting those whom he left behind him in a position of unavoidable antagonism. Next to the King of Spain, the first prince of the blood was Philip Duke d'Orleans, a man of proved courage, and not destitute of political and general ability of a high order, but dissolute and wicked to the very last degree; believed to be guilty of debaucheries far exceeding all ordinary licence, and known to have formed, at least in one instance, plans for his own aggrandizement at the expense of relatives who were nearer the throne than himself. The only other princes with a genuine claim to the honours of royalty were the Duke de Bourbon, his brother and cousin, the Count de Charolais and the Prince de Conti; but they were only distant relations of the new sovereign; they were also too young to be trusted with an important office, and the late king thought that he had done for them all that could be expected of him when he provided for the admission of the Duke de Bourbon into the Council of Regency on his attaining the age of twenty-four.

It had been, no doubt, from a reliance on these different circumstances, which surrounded with objections any selection that might be made from the legitimate royal family, that the Duke de Maine, with the assistance of Madame de Maintenon, who, as

* "J'ai fait mon testament," dit-il; "on m'a tourmenté pour le faire. J'en connais l'impuissance et l'inutilité. Vivans, nous pouvons tout; morts, nos volontés sont moins respectées que celles des particuliers."—Lacretelle, i. 90.

the governess of his childhood, had always regarded him with peculiar affection, had worked on the mind of the dying Louis to wring from him the appointments of guardian to the young king, and commander-in-chief of the household brigade, while the office allotted to the Duke D'Orleans, though he was to be designated with the title of Regent, was in effect only that of President of the Council of Regency. While Louis XIV. still lived, Maine believed that these dispositions were known only to himself and his party; but D'Orleans was as well acquainted with them as he. Villeroi and Voisin, the Chancellor and Minister of War, though far from able men, were capable of appreciating the vast difference between the capacity of the two dukes, and also the superiority of right which, in the eyes of all the nobility and of the Parliament, the genuine royalty of the one possessed over the spurious pretensions of the other. They both saw clearly that, in the struggle to which the king's will must inevitably give rise, D'Orleans would prevail; and, as they had previously been of the party opposed to him, they thought it politic to conciliate him while the event still appeared uncertain. Villeroi had no personal object to gain; but Voisin was anxious to preserve the seals, and he thought that the revelation of the contents of the king's will would prove a bribe sufficient to secure them to him. He judged correctly; D'Orleans promised to purchase his secretaryship at its full value, and to leave him in possession of the more dignified office; and he, in return, showed the duke a copy of the will and codicils which he had himself drawn. D'Orleans was not surprised. No one knew better the incurable falsehood and perfidy of the late king; and the earnestness with which, on his deathbed, he had

assured him that he would find no cause of personal dissatisfaction in his arrangements, was sufficient to excite doubts in the mind even of one less habitually suspicious.* He now took his measures with sagacity and promptitude. The few days which remained of the king's life he spent in strengthening himself for the contest on which he was determined. By judicious attentions, liberal promises, and, where they would be accepted, bribes, he won over the leaders of the Parliament, the officers of the household brigade, and the greater portion of the troops; while his principal confidant, the Abbé Dubois, succeeded in inducing the English ambassador, Lord Stair, a man of the greatest talent and firmness, to look upon him as the friend of the new Hanoverian dynasty, and on Maine as committed to the cause of the exiled Stuarts.

The way being thus smoothed in all quarters for the attainment of his object, the moment that the king died D'Orleans proceeded to carry out his plan of operation with more energy and steadiness than he was in the habit of displaying. Louis in his last hours had directed that, after his death, the First President should without delay convoke the Parliament, and read his will to them. And in compliance with this injunction, on the evening of the 1st of September, the members were summoned for the next morning. But the duke would not suffer the President to read the will at all till he had first asserted his own indisputable right to the Regency with full and undivided authority.† And he warned the assembly to beware

* St. Simon speaks of him as "Toujours soupçonneux."

† "Sitôt que l'assemblée fut formée il remontra en peu de mots son droit à la Régence, faisant entendre que ce droit ne devoit pas même être

of confounding the right to that power which he derived from his birth with any other claim which might devolve on him through his uncle's will. Whether he was carried away by the impulse of the moment, or whether he desired to cajole the Parliament by holding out a prospect of allowing them a privilege for which they had often, in times past, ineffectually contended, it is impossible to say, but he added the expression of a hope that, in all his endeavours to secure the public weal, he should be aided by their counsels and sage remonstrances.* He had taken good care that they should not remonstrate on the present occasion, for he had filled the avenues to the palace with troops on whose adherence he could depend.† And when at last he had permitted the President to read the will, which was received with evident marks of astonishment,‡ he proceeded to explain, in opposition to its provisions, which he criticised with but little regard to the character of the late king for common sense or common truthfulness, his ideas of the authority indispensable to discharge the duties of Regent. He so far softened his denunciation of his uncle§ as to attribute his having signed such a will at all to the circumstance of others having taken advantage of the weakness of his last days to surprise him into acts of which he did not see all the consequences, and he looked hard at the Duke de Maine

mis en question ; c'est-à-dire qu'il se déclara Régent, et il le fut avant même qu'on eût ouvert le testament."—D'Anquetil, iv. 62.

* Lacretelle, I. iii. He adds : " Les magistrats par cette promesse se voyaient encore les tuteurs des rois."

† Sismoudi, viii. 42.

‡ " Le Parlement fut très-étonné de voir que celui qu'il avait déclaré Régent n'y était nommé que chef du Conseil de Régence."—D'Anquetil, iv. 63.

§ St. Simon, xiii. 218-20 ; Lacretelle, i. 114-16.

as he uttered this insinuation ; but he did not the less lay it down as a position which admitted of no dispute, that his authority as Regent ought to be complete and independent, and that the nomination of the Council of Regency belonged to him ; since it was not to be expected that he could discuss affairs of the state, of intended measures of policy, with any persons but those in whom he had entire confidence.

Maine rose to reply, but D'Orleans stopped him with the assurance that he should speak when it came to his turn, and completely silenced him till Joly de Fleury, the Advocate-General, a man of high reputation as a lawyer and of great influence in the Parliament, had delivered his opinion. He strenuously urged the Parliament to entrust the Regency to D'Orleans ; the feeling of the great majority was seen to be decidedly in his favour ; and even those who had not been won over to that prince's interest saw that to upset the late king's will carried with it a far greater appearance of authority on the part of the Parliament than to accept and confirm it. Not a voice was raised in opposition. By an unanimous vote D'Orleans was declared Regent, with full powers ; and having thus secured his own authority, he rose again, and in a second speech proceeded to strip the Duke de Maine of his, of the commands, that is, which the late king's will had conferred on him. He could hardly fail to convince his hearers when he contended that the chief government of the household troops must belong to the Regent. But, though his argument was logically irresistible, he was no longer heard as cheerfully nor followed as assentingly as before. For it was very commonly understood that Louis, not having discarded the suspicions which had been excited by the death of the Duke de Berri, had been influenced in the arrange-

ments prescribed in his will for the custody and education of the infant king, by a fear for his safety, if he were placed under the control of a prince so unscrupulous as D'Orleans, who was himself the next heir to the throne. And many members of the Parliament secretly shared the same apprehensions. But what many felt no one dared to express; they were silenced by their own act, since if D'Orleans were not fit to be entrusted with the life of his cousin and sovereign, how could it be reasonable to confer on him the government of the whole kingdom, which they had unanimously just placed in his hands? And they were so perplexed by these conflicting feelings that, when Maine, colouring and stammering, tried to say a few words in his own behalf, and to argue that the command of the king's household, whether civil or military, was requisite to enable him properly to provide for his education and safety, he was listened to with the same gloomy silence with which D'Orleans himself had last been received. The two princes, disappointed and provoked, began to wrangle with each other, and if the Duke de St. Simon, to whom we are chiefly indebted for the account of this strange sitting, had not prevailed on D'Orleans to adjourn it over the dinner hour till the evening, there seemed a high probability of their discomposing the dignity of the palace by an unseemly brawl.

The interval between the adjournment and the re-assembling was employed by D'Orleans in strengthening himself still further, and securing the adhesion and co-operation of the other legitimate princes of the blood, by promising the Duke de Bourbon immediate admission into the Council of Regency, for which the will of Louis had pronounced him too young. And when the sitting was resumed, Maine saw nothing

better to do than to declare that, since he was to be deprived of the command of the household brigade, he desired also to be relieved of all responsibility for the safety of the king's person, and to retain no office beyond that of superintending his education. D'Orleans instantly took him at his word. "Certainly, sir," said he, "that is all that is wanted." A fresh decree was passed embodying all the demands of the one duke and the concessions of the other; and the Regent, having first expressed in brief and dignified language his acknowledgments for the confidence reposed in him, proceeded at once to announce the system on which he intended to conduct the government, and for which he endeavoured in the first instance to conciliate support by affirming that he had found it sketched out in the papers of the young king's father, the Duke of Burgundy, who, as he was well aware, had been held in far higher esteem than himself by the more respectable portion of the Parliament.

It was a system of putting every office in commission. There were no longer to be secretaries of state, ministers, nor superintendents, but the head of each department was to be only the president of the council or board to which its management was to be entrusted. These councils D'Orleans proposed to appoint without delay; and two of them, the Council of Foreign Affairs, and one for an entirely new department, that of Ecclesiastical Affairs, or, as it was also named, of Conscience, he stated that he intended to select mainly from among the most experienced members of the Parliament, that by their legal and constitutional knowledge they might keep the government clear of error in all matters relating to international law and the liberties of the Gallican church. The Parliament was delighted. It accepted this avowal of

his intentions not as an empty compliment, but as a measure to invest them with substantial political power. No one ventured to question the sagacity of the proposed arrangements, much less to oppose them, and when the First President had replied, eulogizing the Regent in a few complimentary and general phrases, the meeting was adjourned. In a discussion of a few hours it had entirely annulled the will of the late king, though many months of tedious formalities would have been requisite to dispense with the most trifling testamentary arrangement of an individual; and it had vested the whole authority of the realm for eight years in a prince whom the majority of the members believed capable of, and indeed guilty of, the blackest crimes, and whom every one knew to be stained with the foulest profligacy.

Without loss of time he began to nominate the councils of which he had spoken. No man was ever less fit for such a task. Not that he was not possessed of brilliant and varied abilities. In war he had shown great courage and no inconsiderable judgment. Of the endowments which qualify a man to shine in peace, he had wit, good humour, shrewdness in estimating the characters and objects of those with whom he had to deal; he was utterly free from jealousy of the capacity of others; he was affable; he was humane. But there was hardly one of his talents and virtues which was not neutralized by some countervailing defect. His mother had described his character in an apologue. "The fairies," she said, "had been generally invited to the birth of her son, and each who came conferred on him some enviable gift. But one spiteful fairy, who had been overlooked in the invitations, also presented herself, and as she could not take away the good attributes with which her sisters had

endowed the infant, she added this, that of none of his talents or virtues should he ever make a good use." And for the election of these councils, each of which was to consist of ten members, he was, in spite of his accurate judgment of character, especially disqualified by two defects, firstly, because he was of a most suspicious temper, and had the worst possible opinion of mankind; and secondly, because however inconsistent the two qualities may seem, he was at the same time so facile and pliable that he was unable to refuse any request that was pressed with importunity.

Yet, notwithstanding these weaknesses, his choice of councillors was, for the most part, judicious. In all his ministerial and departmental arrangements the Duke de St. Simon was his principal confidant, and in this instance he had chosen his adviser well; for the duke was probably the most honest man in the whole country; in spite of being a poor man for his rank, so entirely disinterested that he refused at first to accept any place for himself, though he subsequently so far yielded to the Regent's earnest entreaty as to become a member of the Council of Regency; and shrewd and correct in his judgment of his brother nobles, and occasionally of foreign powers and ministers.* We cannot, indeed, attribute to him large views of statesmanship; and a story which he has preserved of himself shows that he esteemed matters of the merest etiquette almost on a level with those of the policy and government of the kingdom. On the very day

* Professor Smyth pays him the high compliment of comparing him to the first Lord Clarendon: "Our own Charles is made to revive in our memory in the person of the Regent, the Duke of Orleans; and Clarendon in the virtuous and faithful St. Simon; but the Regent is more outrageously debauched than Charles, and St. Simon, brought up in an arbitrary court, cannot share the views and feelings of Clarendon."—"Lectures on Modern History," xxvii. 27.

of the king's death, while D'Orleans and his other adherents were busy in arranging plans for their conduct in the sitting of the Parliament on the morrow, he placed in the very front of their deliberations the importance of settling the question known as that of *le bonnet*, or the degree of salute which the dukes and peers were entitled to receive from the President of the Parliament whenever they made a speech or gave a vote. And the next morning when the Parliament met, he would not allow it to proceed to business till he had risen, as the spokesman of his brother peers, to protest that their conduct in attending and taking the affairs of the kingdom into consideration, before their own claims on this head were satisfactorily arranged, was not to be looked on as any waiver of those claims, than which nothing could be more dear to them, nor more deeply founded on justice,* nor as any acquiescence in the act of the President in withholding the compliment to which they were entitled: but that they consented to postpone the assertion of their own rights to the discussion of the matters of general policy on which they were about to enter, because they had received from the Duke d'Orleans a promise that the interests of their order should be the next thing attended to.

But with the exception of this weakness about trivial questions of ceremony, which indeed was in that age too general to be imputed as a peculiar folly to any one individual, the counsels which St. Simon

* St. Simon, xiii. 215. He speaks of the President's conduct as "L'usurpation plus qu'indécence du bonnet;" and of the claims of the peers as "les affaires les plus particulières, les plus chères, et les plus justes." Sismondi, with a better appreciation of the importance of the matter at issue, speaks of "la futile et ridicule querelle du bonnet."—viii. 42.

gave his master and friend were for the most part sagacious and honorable. Besides the formal alterations made in the ministerial departments, the personal changes were of the most sweeping kind. Voisin, the chancellor, a man of no abilities or importance whatever, had, as we have seen, contrived to purchase his retention of the seals. But every one of the secretaries of state and superintendents were removed from all connexion with their former offices. Villars became President of the Council for War, nor could any other selection have well been made; for Vendôme and Boufflers, the only marshals who in the last war had earned a reputation superior to his, had both died before its conclusion. The Count de Toulouse was placed at the head of the Board of Marine, De Torcy received the prodigious sum of 800,000 livres in purchase of his Secretaryship for Foreign Affairs, and the Presidency of that Council was conferred on the Marquis d'Huxelles, who, as the chief negotiator of the Peace of Ryswick, was well known to most of the foreign ministers. The Duke d'Antin became chief of the Council of the Interior. He was a legitimate son of Madame de Montespan, and, as such, half-brother to Maine and Toulouse. He was also a man of the most splendid and varied talents and accomplishments; a finished courtier, a most laborious and acute man of business, clear and correct in his comprehension, singularly lucid and powerful in his explanations, the admiration of his colleagues and the delight of society. Yet so complete was the demoralization of all ranks and classes in France, which, as we have already pointed out, was the result of the late king's reign and example, that St. Simon, who gives him this high character, adds that he was so notorious a coward, and had given such repeated instances of the

very basest poltroonery, that his companions had come to look upon it as beneath them to insult him; and that he was more than suspected of cheating at cards.* The Duke de Noailles was to preside over the Council of Finance. The Ecclesiastical Council was placed under the presidency of his uncle, the Cardinal de Noailles; an appointment which was a severe blow to the Jesuits, and one which they made great efforts to avert the moment that they saw reason to anticipate it. St. Simon, to whom the selection of the cardinal was principally owing, was aware that they had prevailed on the Pope to promise to remonstrate against it, and therefore urged the Regent to give no time for the intended demonstration, and his Holiness was reduced to show his discontent by empty complaints, which were easily put aside by a few complimentary phrases, so expressed as to show plainly that there was no intention of revoking what had been done.

There was one exception to the abolition of the office of Secretary of State, which was the more singular because the secretary himself, as being notoriously incompetent, was removed, and his son, a boy of fourteen, was appointed to succeed him. M. de Pontchartrain, the son of the former chancellor, had lately been Minister of Marine. He had always been completely and notoriously ignorant of naval affairs; but at first, out of regard for his father, the Regent forbore to displace him, and provided that the Council should assist him. But when it began to meet, the presence of Toulouse and another veteran officer, the Count d'Estrées, at the board, made his incompetency

* "En un mot, il était devenu honteux d'insulter d'Antin. . . . jouait tous les jeux fort bien : heureux à ceux de hasard ; et avec tout cela, fut accusé d'aider la fortune."—St. Simon, v. 415-17.

so much more conspicuous, that it attracted universal ridicule. His office gave him the superiority even over Toulouse; but in their discussions he never opened his mouth, nor even rose from his seat, except to snuff the candles; and St. Simon, who had a private grudge against him, persuaded the Regent to remove him, and, by way of softening the blow to his father, to put his son, the young Count de Maurepas,* in his place. When, a year or two afterwards, the councils were suppressed, the entrusting so important a department to a boy proved the source of great evils.

These councils, however, did not last long enough to have any practical effect of moment. The Regent soon found that such bodies could not be rendered and kept as dependent on himself as individuals, and that he could not equally depend on them. And, after a couple of years, he dismissed them, and returned to the old system. But the Council of Regency which he next proceeded to appoint was of a different character, and of greater importance, since it would be impossible for him to dispense with that till the king attained his majority. And its selection was also a matter of the more difficulty, because he had to balance with friends of his own those whom he knew or believed to be his enemies, and whom, nevertheless, it was impossible to exclude. The privileges of legitimacy which the late king had bestowed on Maine and Toulouse, and the confidence which by his will he had testified in Villeroi, gave them an almost irresistible title to a place at that board; and the Marshal d'Harcourt, a man of abilities too eminent and of character too high to be passed over with prudence, was also too intimate with Madame de

* St. Simon, xiii. 370.

Maintenon, not to be looked on with suspicion by any rival of Maine. On the opposition of the Duke de Bourbon to Maine and his party the Regent could safely count; he, therefore, was to be President of the Council; next to him D'Orleans nominated St. Simon; and, though not without occasional difficulty, prevailed on him to retain his place throughout. He added Marshal Besons at his own request. That the Council might not be at a loss when religious or ecclesiastical affairs came before it, he determined on placing on it the Bishop of Troyes. And, with a similar feeling of the necessity of having one councillor well versed in foreign affairs, he gave the last seat to De Torcy; being quite aware that hitherto he had leant to the opposite party, but having first taken care to secure his future adhesion to himself by enormous grants and liberal pensions, the latter of which he could at any moment revoke.

In the matter of the young king's education the Regent forbore to change the arrangements which had been decided on by Louis XIV., except in one point. The Duke de Maine, as we have already seen, retained the chief superintendence. Villeroy was his Lieutenant-Governor; the Duchess de Ventadour his governess; Fleury, the Bishop of Fréjus, was his tutor. And not only his present post, but still more his subsequent elevation, forbid us to pass over this prelate with a mere mention of his name. He was of no high birth, being the son of a receiver of taxes in Languedoc; but he was eminently gifted with those graces of person and manner which are often supposed to be the especial attributes and distinctive marks of noble blood; and with an unflinching tact which gained him friends among the most powerful of the one sex, and the most beautiful and

influential of the other. He was not without ambition, which, however, was under so judicious a restraint, and was so sagaciously limited to what was within his reach, that he never failed to obtain what he desired. And, though his abilities were far from brilliant, he yet conducted himself in the different situations to which he raised himself, dignified and important as they were, with such prudence, that while he filled them scarcely a murmur was raised against the manner in which he discharged them. After his death, his detractors discovered that the education which he had bestowed on the king had neither been calculated to enlarge his mind nor to strengthen his principles; that his own policy as a minister had been weak and temporizing. But, in truth, the weaknesses and vices which stained the character of Louis XV. were not the fruit of his lessons. He did his best to implant in his mind habits of application and principles of virtue.* And it was an unhappy day for France when his economical and peaceful administration was exchanged for the sway of shameless mistresses and still more shameless priests and courtiers. The one instance in which D'Orleans did not retain about the person of his young cousin those whom his great-grandfather had appointed to watch over him, was that of Tellier. This morose Jesuit had all the vices of his sect, but none of their address. Being of a self-confident and uncompromising spirit, he had domineered over Louis and his unacknowledged wife, till his influence over them had become paramount; and Louis by his will had appointed him confessor to his heir. But by

* "Il s'en consola en formant insensiblement son élève aux affaires, au secret, à la probité."—"Siècle de Louis XV.," c. 3;—and Voltaire may certainly be trusted when he praises a priest.

every one else Tellier was feared and cordially hated, and no act of the Regent was received with greater applause than his dismissal. As the new king was too young to have need of a confessor, the Jesuit applied to D'Orleans to know what he was to do* till his majesty was of an age to have recourse to his ministrations. The duke cared little whether the king ever confessed or not, but he was anxious, and had the power, to get rid of Tellier; he was indifferent to dangers, but he was keenly alive to annoyances, and the presence of so arrogant and bigoted a priest would have been a continual annoyance.† "What," replied he, "have I to do with that? Apply to your superiors." But he presently showed that he had something to do with him, by sending him an order to quit Paris and retire to Amiens. The next year, finding that under the influence partly of his constitutional restlessness, and partly of his desire of revenge, he was intriguing against his government, not only in France, but with the enemies of the country, he confined him in a convent, and there in 1719 the once powerful Tellier died universally detested.

From the completion of these arrangements the administration of the Regent, the Regency, to use the term by which it has always been known, as if there had been no other Regent in French history, may be said to begin. We have mentioned that the different councils which the Regent appointed had too brief an

* Lacretelle, i. 131.

† The character given of Tellier by St. Simon, which is fully borne out by other authorities, is "D'un esprit dur, entêté, appliqué sans relâche, dépourvu de tout autre goût, ennemi de toute dissipation, de toute société, de tout amusement, incapable d'en prendre avec ses propres confrères, il ne faisait cas d'aucun que selon la mesure de la conformité de leur passion avec celle qui l'occupait tout entier."—vii. 25.

existence to be of any practical importance. But the composition of the Ecclesiastical Council, coupled with the dismissal of Tellier, was supposed to give in one important respect an indication of the policy hereafter to be pursued. It seemed to show that the days of religious intolerance and persecution had passed away. And for awhile the Jansenists, and even the Huguenots, began to raise their heads; many of the latter returning from the foreign lands to which they had emigrated, and taking steps to reorganize their churches and forms of public worship. At the beginning of the year 1717, the Church of France and the Government also appeared on the point of coming to a formal quarrel with the Pope. The Sorbonne revoked its acceptance of the bull *Unigenitus*, and some of the bishops formally appealed against it to a General Council; while the Pope endeavoured, as a punishment, to lay his hands on some of their revenues, and refused to institute some of the Regent's nominees to vacant dioceses, though among them was Massillon, the most renowned preacher that has ever adorned a French pulpit. The Regent was greatly exasperated. To the offence thus wantonly given him by the Pope, other considerations of great weight were added. The treasury and the public revenue were in the last stage of exhaustion, and he was keen-sighted enough to attribute a great part of the general distress which forced itself upon his notice from all sides to the expulsion from the country of so many of its most useful citizens by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. He was also very anxious to conciliate England and Holland, and to form a close and lasting alliance with these nations; and, under the combined influence of all these views and feelings, he began to contemplate the re-establishment of Henry's policy, and the recall

of the Protestant emigrants. In this instance the influence of St. Simon, whom he consulted on the subject, proved most pernicious. We must do the duke the justice to admit that of the arguments which he used with too great success to dissuade the Regent from his purpose, not one was founded on principles of religious intolerance. He neither urged the infallibility of the Pope, nor the propriety of forcing the religion of the sovereign on all his subjects. His reasonings were all drawn from views of policy and precedents of past history; not indeed always with correctness; and, did the statement rest on any testimony but his own, we might have found it hard to believe that he laid on the Huguenots all the blame of the formation of the League, and that he mixed up Huguenots and Leaguers together in his description of the degree in which the throne of Henry IV., even before he became a Catholic, was endangered by their tumults and machinations.* It may be added that when also he reproached the Protestant chiefs with the civil war, and with their application for aid to foreign powers, he shut his eyes to the fact that they were in every case the attacked and not the attacking party. But it can hardly be denied that he had reason on his side when he objected to the manner in which the Peace of Vervins and other treaties secured them the toleration which had been granted to them; and when he affirmed that some of the powers conceded to them, such as those of holding meetings, and raising money, tended to create a State within a State, and were, if not incompatible with, at least dangerous to the tranquillity of the State. And, though it was in reality a condemnation not of the Protestants, but of the faith-

* St. Simon, xiv. 156.

lessness and cruelty with which Louis XIV. had treated them, and to which the few who remained in the different provinces were still exposed, his assertion could hardly seem unreasonable that those who had suffered so severely would, before they could be induced to return, require better security than they had had before against a recurrence of such persecution. He did not indeed abstain from condemning the late king in express words, though he applied his censure more to the manner in which he had revoked the Edict, and carried out the revocation, than to the act itself; and concluded his harangue by what he probably expected to prove the strongest argument of all, arguing that, as the Huguenots who had quitted the country had now abandoned all hope of returning, it would save much trouble to leave things as they were. Things were left as they were; and encouraged by this apparent perseverance in bigotry on the part of the Regent, the governors and commanders in some provinces began to wreak fresh cruelties on all the Protestants on whom they could lay their hands. The Parliament of Bordeaux equalled the soldiers in hostility to them, and condemned a number whom the Duke of Berwick had captured to the gallies; but the Regent feared to disgust his Protestant allies by sanctioning such cruelties. He ordered the release of the prisoners; and by a subsequent injunction limited all severities to the clergy, and forbade any enquiry to be made for the members of their congregations.

In another, and a somewhat kindred matter, the Regent showed a marked difference between his government and that of the old king, thus prompting a comparison greatly to his own advantage; the degree to which it proved so being at first unsuspected, even by himself. No part of the policy of

Louis XIV. had been more detestable, more utterly at variance with every principle of justice and humanity, than the way in which he had been in the habit of consigning people to prison on the most frivolous pretexts, often on grounds scarcely distinguishable from mere caprice. And one of the first measures of D'Orleans was to order the different officials to bring him a list of those who were in confinement or exile in compliance with the king's orders or signified in warrants, technically known as *lettres de cachet*. The number of prisoners was found to be enormous. The grounds of their punishment, where they could be ascertained, were usually frivolous in the extreme. But in the large proportion of instances no cause whatever had been assigned, nor could any be discovered. Many were only suspected of Jansenism; many, it was believed, had been arrested by mistake. And St. Simon has related one case, not as being distinguished by any peculiar hardship, but as a fair specimen of the manner in which these odious warrants had been granted and executed. Among the prisoners found in the Bastille was an Italian traveller. He had been arrested on the very day of his arrival in Paris, thirty-five years before. During the whole of that period he had been kept in solitary confinement. The cause of his arrest he had never been able to learn. He had never been brought before any tribunal, nor had any enquiry of any kind been made into his guilt or innocence. He had always considered himself the victim of some mistake. But, miserable as his captivity had been, when liberty was offered him, it seemed to open to him a fate still more cruel than his dungeon. He asked in piteous accents, if they expelled him from his prison, what was to become of him. He was utterly destitute. In Paris, or even in

lessness and cruelty with which I had treated them, and to which the few who remained in the different provinces were still exposed. His assertion could hardly seem unreasonable that those who had suffered so severely would, before they were induced to return, require better security than they had had before against a recurrence of such violence. He did not indeed abstain from condemning the king in express words, though he applied the blame more to the manner in which he had revoked than to the revocation itself. He carried out the revocation, than to the manner in which he concluded his harangue by what he presented as the strongest argument of all, that the Huguenots who had quitted France now abandoned all hope of returning, and that it was much trouble to leave things as they were, and encouraged by the perseverance in bigotry on the part of the governors and commanders in some provinces to wreak fresh cruelties on all the Protestants whom they could lay their hands on. The Parliament of Bordeaux equalled the soldiers in hostility to the Protestants and condemned a number whom the Duke of Beaufort had captured to the gallies; but the Regent feared to disgust his Protestant allies by sanctioning such cruelties. He ordered the release of the prisoners, and by a subsequent injunction limited all severities to the clergy, and forbade any enquiry to be made for the members of their congregations.

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of character, readiness of wit, real or affected frivolity of disposition, and strength of constitution sufficient to stand the ceaseless, measureless excess of the unhallowed orgies. To the men he himself gave the name of *roués*, to signify, as he explained it, that they were all guilty of offences that deserved to be expiated on the wheel. The women he spared any such distinctive appellation, but the general voice proclaimed them still more vile and abandoned than their male companions ; and the worst of all was the duchess, who at times transferred the scene of revelry to her own apartments at the Luxemburg. As soon as the whole company were assembled the doors were closed, that no uninitiated person might interrupt and shame the revellers by his unexpected entrance. The viands were sumptuous, the wines exquisite, and as the drunkenness, which was an inviolable duty, stole over the company, their stories and witticisms became hourly more shameless and more profane.* Each guest vied with his neighbour in the obscenity of his jests, in the impiety of his scoffs, and he or she was held most in honour who was the most original or the most unrestrained in the disavowal of every principle of religion, or virtue, or honour. For keenness of wit, foulness of ribaldry, and depth of intoxication, none could surpass the Regent himself ; but it was remarked that however enamoured or however drunk he might be, no boon companion or mistress could ever extract from him a State secret or obtain the least hint of any purpose of the Government. A few, indeed, of the guests had no need of such revelation, for the Marquis de Canillac, though one of the most profligate of all, was from the first a member of the Council of Foreign

* St. Simon, xiv. 41, &c.

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* St. Simon, xiv. 156.

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These councils, however, did not last long enough to have any practical effect of moment. The Regent soon found that such bodies could not be rendered and kept as dependent on himself as individuals, and that he could not equally depend on them. And, after a couple of years, he dismissed them, and returned to the old system. But the Council of Regency which he next proceeded to appoint was of a different character, and of greater importance, since it would be impossible for him to dispense with that till the king attained his majority. And its selection was also a matter of the more difficulty, because he had to balance with friends of his own those whom he knew or believed to be his enemies, and whom, nevertheless, it was impossible to exclude. The privileges of legitimacy which the late king had bestowed on Maine and Toulouse, and the confidence which by his will he had testified in Villeroi, gave them an almost irresistible title to a place at that board; and the Marshal d'Harcourt, a man of abilities too eminent and of character too high to be passed over with prudence, was also too intimate with Madame de

* St. Simon, xiii. 370.

Maintenon, not to be looked on with suspicion by any rival of Maine. On the opposition of the Duke de Bourbon to Maine and his party the Regent could safely count; he, therefore, was to be President of the Council; next to him D'Orleans nominated St. Simon; and, though not without occasional difficulty, prevailed on him to retain his place throughout. He added Marshal Besons at his own request. That the Council might not be at a loss when religious or ecclesiastical affairs came before it, he determined on placing on it the Bishop of Troyes. And, with a similar feeling of the necessity of having one councillor well versed in foreign affairs, he gave the last seat to De Torcy; being quite aware that hitherto he had leant to the opposite party, but having first taken care to secure his future adhesion to himself by enormous grants and liberal pensions, the latter of which he could at any moment revoke.

In the matter of the young king's education the Regent forbore to change the arrangements which had been decided on by Louis XIV., except in one point. The Duke de Maine, as we have already seen, retained the chief superintendence. Villeroi was his Lieutenant-Governor; the Duchess de Ventadour his governess; Fleury, the Bishop of Fréjus, was his tutor. And not only his present post, but still more his subsequent elevation, forbid us to pass over this prelate with a mere mention of his name. He was of no high birth, being the son of a receiver of taxes in Languedoc; but he was eminently gifted with those graces of person and manner which are often supposed to be the especial attributes and distinctive marks of noble blood; and with an unfailing tact which gained him friends among the most powerful of the one sex, and the most beautiful and

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* St. Simon, xiii. 370.

sador, Lord Stair, who in tastes and habits of licentiousness bore too great a resemblance to himself, and also with General Stanhope, who in the recent changes of the English Ministry had become Secretary of State. And he had personal motives for thinking the alliance with England more desirable and more trustworthy than that with any other nation. He had constantly in view the probability of the young king's death, in which event he would be the next heir to the throne, if the renunciation of Philip of Spain were held valid. But he had good reason to expect Philip to disregard that renunciation, and, as he was determined to assert his rights, he foresaw a struggle in which the aid of England would be all-important. The English Ministers had a reason akin to his for cultivating the French alliance, since the one danger which they dreaded was the assertion by the Pretender of his hereditary rights; and no continental power except France could afford him any effectual assistance in the attempt to establish them. They were not, indeed, afraid that, even with the help of France, he could succeed, but they were well assured that without such help he could not even give the Government any serious trouble. The very first month of the new reign had shown how greatly the enterprise and prospects of the Stuarts in England depended on the friendship of the French sovereign. The eldest son of James II., James III. as his adherents styled him, and as Louis XIV. in his insolence had acknowledged him to be; the Pretender, as he was called by the British Government, was preparing an expedition to invade England in vindication of his rights when Louis XIV. died, and a squadron to serve as his escort was lying ready for sea in the harbour of Havre-de-Grace. It is doubtful whether the death of Louis

endowed the infant, she added this, that of none of his talents or virtues should he ever make a good use." And for the election of these councils, each of which was to consist of ten members, he was, in spite of his accurate judgment of character, especially disqualified by two defects, firstly, because he was of a most suspicious temper, and had the worst possible opinion of mankind; and secondly, because however inconsistent the two qualities may seem, he was at the same time so facile and pliable that he was unable to refuse any request that was pressed with importunity.

Yet, notwithstanding these weaknesses, his choice of councillors was, for the most part, judicious. In all his ministerial and departmental arrangements the Duke de St. Simon was his principal confidant, and in this instance he had chosen his adviser well; for the duke was probably the most honest man in the whole country; in spite of being a poor man for his rank, so entirely disinterested that he refused at first to accept any place for himself, though he subsequently so far yielded to the Regent's earnest entreaty as to become a member of the Council of Regency; and shrewd and correct in his judgment of his brother nobles, and occasionally of foreign powers and ministers.* We cannot, indeed, attribute to him large views of statesmanship; and a story which he has preserved of himself shows that he esteemed matters of the merest etiquette almost on a level with those of the policy and government of the kingdom. On the very day

* Professor Smyth pays him the high compliment of comparing him to the first Lord Clarendon: "Our own Charles is made to revive in our memory in the person of the Regent, the Duke of Orleans; and Clarendon in the virtuous and faithful St. Simon; but the Regent is more outrageously debauched than Charles, and St. Simon, brought up in an arbitrary court, cannot share the views and feelings of Clarendon."—"Lectures on Modern History," xxvii. 27.

with that country; arguing from the events of the reign of Charles the Second, that even when the King of England was well-disposed to France, the people were so hostile, and had so much power, that they could drive him into war, as Charles had been compelled by them to unite himself to the enemies of Louis. But, fortunately for both countries, the influence of Dubois was greater than even that of St. Simon, and his arguments, drawn from the present and future, were more powerful than those which relied only on the past, on the policy of men now dead, and on the character of events the whole course of which was changed with the deaths of the former sovereigns. The alliance with England was decided on, and, when in the summer of 1716 King George crossed over to his Hanoverian dominions, accompanied by Stanhope, Dubois repaired to the Hague to discuss the interests of the two kingdoms, and the conditions of a treaty between them, with the British Minister, with whom he had already opened a correspondence. A curious attempt was made to envelop his proceedings in mystery; though it could not be supposed that any one in either country was ignorant of what was going on. Dubois travelled in disguise, under a feigned name, and, when he reached the Hague, professed to be occupied in a search for fine pictures and rare books, a large sale of which was about to take place in the neighbourhood. After one or two conferences, Stanhope invited him to Hanover, and there, in the course of the autumn, the whole negotiation was successfully concluded, though not without much diplomatic wrangling. The chief points in dispute were the manner in which the Pretender, who was now residing at Avignon, was to be dealt with; and the form of expression by which England was

gave his master and friend were for the most part sagacious and honorable. Besides the formal alterations made in the ministerial departments, the personal changes were of the most sweeping kind. Voisin, the chancellor, a man of no abilities or importance whatever, had, as we have seen, contrived to purchase his retention of the seals. But every one of the secretaries of state and superintendents were removed from all connexion with their former offices. Villars became President of the Council for War, nor could any other selection have well been made; for Vendôme and Boufflers, the only marshals who in the last war had earned a reputation superior to his, had both died before its conclusion. The Count de Toulouse was placed at the head of the Board of Marine, De Torcy received the prodigious sum of 800,000 livres in purchase of his Secretaryship for Foreign Affairs, and the Presidency of that Council was conferred on the Marquis d'Huxelles, who, as the chief negotiator of the Peace of Ryswick, was well known to most of the foreign ministers. The Duke d'Antin became chief of the Council of the Interior. He was a legitimate son of Madame de Montespan, and, as such, half-brother to Maine and Toulouse. He was also a man of the most splendid and varied talents and accomplishments; a finished courtier, a most laborious and acute man of business, clear and correct in his comprehension, singularly lucid and powerful in his explanations, the admiration of his colleagues and the delight of society. Yet so complete was the demoralization of all ranks and classes in France, which, as we have already pointed out, was the result of the late king's reign and example, that St. Simon, who gives him this high character, adds that he was so notorious a coward, and had given such repeated instances of the

very basest poltroonery, that his companions had come to look upon it as beneath them to insult him; and that he was more than suspected of cheating at cards.* The Duke de Noailles was to preside over the Council of Finance. The Ecclesiastical Council was placed under the presidency of his uncle, the Cardinal de Noailles; an appointment which was a severe blow to the Jesuits, and one which they made great efforts to avert the moment that they saw reason to anticipate it. St. Simon, to whom the selection of the cardinal was principally owing, was aware that they had prevailed on the Pope to promise to remonstrate against it, and therefore urged the Regent to give no time for the intended demonstration, and his Holiness was reduced to show his discontent by empty complaints, which were easily put aside by a few complimentary phrases, so expressed as to show plainly that there was no intention of revoking what had been done.

There was one exception to the abolition of the office of Secretary of State, which was the more singular because the secretary himself, as being notoriously incompetent, was removed, and his son, a boy of fourteen, was appointed to succeed him. M. de Pontchartrain, the son of the former chancellor, had lately been Minister of Marine. He had always been completely and notoriously ignorant of naval affairs; but at first, out of regard for his father, the Regent forbore to displace him, and provided that the Council should assist him. But when it began to meet, the presence of Toulouse and another veteran officer, the Count d'Estrées, at the board, made his incompetency

* "En un mot, il était devenu honteux d'insulter d'Antin. . . . jouait tous les jeux fort bien : heureux à ceux de hasard ; et avec tout cela, fut accusé d'aider la fortune."—St. Simon, v. 415-17.

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* St. Simon, xiii. 370.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BESIDES the putting the foreign affairs of the kingdom on the sound footing of peace, another subject of the greatest importance claimed the Regent's attention, which required different talents from those of Dubois, and a different reputation in the councillors who should be called on to advise him. The finances of the kingdom, which had long been falling into a rapidly increasing state of embarrassment, were, at the death of the late king, in a condition of hopeless exhaustion. The entire amount of the cash which remained in the treasury did not exceed seven hundred and fifty thousand livres (less than thirty thousand pounds), while the floating debt due on bonds, payable at any moment on demand, amounted to almost as many millions.* The interest of the funded debt was not less than eighty-six millions; the entire debt of the State reached three milliards, or three thousand millions; and the most sanguine calculation of the yearly revenue did not represent the annual deficit as less than seventy-seven millions of livres, equal to above three millions of English money. So inextricable did the difficulties of the case seem, that St. Simon, honest and high-minded as in general he was, saw no expedient except the convocation of

* "To 710 millions of livres."—Lacretelle, i. 134.

influential of the other. He was not without ambition, which, however, was under so judicious a restraint, and was so sagaciously limited to what was within his reach, that he never failed to obtain what he desired. And, though his abilities were far from brilliant, he yet conducted himself in the different situations to which he raised himself, dignified and important as they were, with such prudence, that while he filled them scarcely a murmur was raised against the manner in which he discharged them. After his death, his detractors discovered that the education which he had bestowed on the king had neither been calculated to enlarge his mind nor to strengthen his principles; that his own policy as a minister had been weak and temporizing. But, in truth, the weaknesses and vices which stained the character of Louis XV. were not the fruit of his lessons. He did his best to implant in his mind habits of application and principles of virtue.* And it was an unhappy day for France when his economical and peaceful administration was exchanged for the sway of shameless mistresses and still more shameless priests and courtiers. The one instance in which D'Orleans did not retain about the person of his young cousin those whom his great-grandfather had appointed to watch over him, was that of Tellier. This morose Jesuit had all the vices of his sect, but none of their address. Being of a self-confident and uncompromising spirit, he had domineered over Louis and his unacknowledged wife, till his influence over them had become paramount; and Louis by his will had appointed him confessor to his heir. But by

* "Il s'en consola en formant insensiblement son élève aux affaires, au secret, à la probité."—"Siècle de Louis XV.," c. 3;—and Voltaire may certainly be trusted when he praises a priest.

been presented for investigation, it was announced at once that they were to be reduced to two hundred and fifty millions, which for the future were only to bear an interest of 4 per cent. But even after this enormous deduction of more than half the debt, the creditors were deprived of another fifth by an arbitrary cancellation of such a portion of these bonds; and this part of the burdens of the State was thus reduced to one hundred and ninety-five millions.*

The proceedings against the money-dealers and the revenue-officers were, in proportion, almost equally productive. Against the former no frauds could possibly be proved; indeed in the very nature of things none could be alleged. All that was imputed to them was that they had taken the utmost advantage of the necessities of the State, and of the consequent fall of the national credit, to lend their money at as high a rate of interest as they could obtain. And this conduct they were now doomed to expiate by being subjected to arbitrary impositions, in proportion to the gains which they were supposed to have made, to so enormous an amount, that a hundred and eighty millions of livres, or above seven millions sterling, were extorted from four hundred individuals.† And their submission to these exactions was enforced by the severity of the punishments which were inflicted on those who were selected for criminal prosecution. Care was taken that they should not escape, their houses being rigorously watched, and the postmasters

* "Six cent millions furent présentés au visa. Une loi ordonna qu'ils seraient réduits le plus équitablement qu'il se pourrait à 250 millions de billets d'Etat, portant un intérêt de quatre-pour-cent. Toutefois par une infidélité qui demeura longtemps cachée, on ne délivra aux propriétaires des effets usés que 195 millions, et les 55 millions restant furent détournés à d'autres usages."—Sismondi, viii. 42.

† D'Anquetil: "La Cour et la Régence," iv. 100.

existence to be of any practical importance. But the composition of the Ecclesiastical Council, coupled with the dismissal of Tellier, was supposed to give in one important respect an indication of the policy hereafter to be pursued. It seemed to show that the days of religious intolerance and persecution had passed away. And for awhile the Jansenists, and even the Huguenots, began to raise their heads; many of the latter returning from the foreign lands to which they had emigrated, and taking steps to reorganize their churches and forms of public worship. At the beginning of the year 1717, the Church of France and the Government also appeared on the point of coming to a formal quarrel with the Pope. The Sorbonne revoked its acceptance of the bull *Unigenitus*, and some of the bishops formally appealed against it to a General Council; while the Pope endeavoured, as a punishment, to lay his hands on some of their revenues, and refused to institute some of the Regent's nominees to vacant dioceses, though among them was Massillon, the most renowned preacher that has ever adorned a French pulpit. The Regent was greatly exasperated. To the offence thus wantonly given him by the Pope, other considerations of great weight were added. The treasury and the public revenue were in the last stage of exhaustion, and he was keen-sighted enough to attribute a great part of the general distress which forced itself upon his notice from all sides to the expulsion from the country of so many of its most useful citizens by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. He was also very anxious to conciliate England and Holland, and to form a close and lasting alliance with these nations; and, under the combined influence of all these views and feelings, he began to contemplate the re-establishment of Henry's policy, and the recall

nently profitable to the proprietors. And in the last year of the preceding reign, another Scotchman, John Law, the son of a wealthy banker in Edinburgh, fleeing from justice in England because he had killed a man in a duel, had come over to Paris, and had proposed to Louis XIV. the institution of a French bank, on similar principles. To the old king an imitation of any part of English policy was utterly distasteful. He at once positively rejected the proposal. But Law was not a man to be discouraged by a single rebuff. He procured access to the Duke d'Orleans, as one who, in the general belief, was certain soon to have power; who being greatly addicted to calculation and speculation, and far more acute in discerning the salient points of a question than sagacious and calm in examining one or both sides, was likely to be easily attracted by a few specious advantages, and who had already begun to regard the English with less disfavour than his uncle. Law was well adapted to influence such a prince, for he was a man of handsome appearance, graceful manners, very accommodating morality, and he had also in a remarkable degree the faculty of lucid explanation and plausible argument. The duke at once recommended him to the notice of Desmarets, then Superintendent of Finance, and spoke of him in high praise to his confidant, St. Simon.

When the duke became Regent, Law again addressed himself to him, and the attention which he had formerly bestowed upon him was now rendered far more lively by the anxiety which the state of the finances caused him as governor of the kingdom. The general ignorance that prevailed on financial subjects increased his idea of Law's capacity. He now ordered the Duke de Noailles to consult him, as he had for-

merly recommended Desmaretz, and encouraged him to submit his project to the Council of Finance,* which, seeing the resolution with which the duke patronized it, passed an almost unanimous vote in approval of it. It was then submitted to the Council of Regency; the Regent urging its adoption with increased zeal, canvassing each member of the Board separately in its favour, and prevailing with every one but St. Simon. St. Simon was an honest friend. If he sometimes carried his complaisance so far as to be silent when he felt that remonstrance could produce no good effect, he never sacrificed his conscience so as to express a sanction of what in his heart he disapproved. And in this instance, when he could not avoid delivering an opinion on one side or the other, he made an elaborate speech against the proposed bank, and justified himself to the Regent on the ground that the Scotchman was the first person since the days of Midas who had professed an ability to turn all that he touched into gold; so that he might well be excused for waiting to see a practical proof of the correctness of such a boast. In truth the inducements which Law held out to the French councillors (there is no reason to suppose that he was not sincere in his belief of their soundness) fell little short of the powers attributed to the Phrygian king in the ancient fable. He had conceived the idea that the wealth of a country was to be measured by the amount of money in circulation; and that notes or bills were as really money as pieces of bullion. And he failed to perceive that this principle, which represented a promise to pay as equivalent to actual payment, held good only so long as he who was bound to pay was possessed of the precious metals in such quantity that

* St. Simon, xiv. 118, *et seq.*

he could always exchange them, and was known to be always able to exchange them, for the paper promises at the pleasure of the holder. In his idea two things only were necessary: the first being that an individual or company should exist with authority to issue paper money to an unlimited extent; the second, that every one else should be so far imbued with his notions of the equality of the value of paper to that of gold and silver, that they would never desire to change the notes which they might hold for those metals. If these two objects were achieved, the kingdom would in a moment be not only relieved from its existing embarrassments, but would be richer than ever, rich beyond all previous example of any country in the world.

The decision of the Council of Regency secured him the first. The moment it was pronounced, in May, 1716, he established a banking company, with a capital of six millions, in twelve hundred shares of five thousand livres each; one of the articles of its charter providing that its notes, payable on demand, should always be paid in specie of the same fineness as that which was current at the time of its establishment. This clause seemed to ensure the holders against such depreciation as proof had already been given this very year that the currency was exposed to; and to such an extent did it secure Law's second object, that the notes soon rose to a premium, fetching in the money-market 5 per cent. more than the gold with which the issuers were bound to redeem them. To strengthen the impression in their favour, the Regent issued an order that the notes should be received by all officers of the revenue and every department of the Government; and this seemed in some sort to pledge the credit of the State itself to the soundness of the speculation.

The shares of the bank rose in value, the shareholders were making great profits, and were believed to be making far greater; and in a few months Law began to be looked upon as the man who was really in possession of the secret of making and dispensing riches. When in the course of the next year he promulgated a new scheme, partly in connexion with his bank, and holding out a prospect of still more abundant profits, he proposed it to a people already disposed to believe any promise that he might choose to announce.

Other passages in this history show that the French, by their warmth of imagination and impetuous levity of character, are generally inclined to look rather at the splendour than at the solidity of any hopes that may be held out to them. And such was the opinion of their shrewdest neighbour with reference to the schemes of which we are now speaking. Before repairing to the Court of Louis, Law had laid his projects before Victor Amédée of Savoy, who, after a patient examination of them, had told him that he was not a prince of such power as to be able to afford to ruin himself and his people, but that his ideas would exactly suit the French. And Law was now about to experience the correctness of the duke's estimate. Towards the end of the preceding century a French colony had been established in the most southern district of North America, on the banks of the Mississippi, and in honour of the king the name of Louisiana had been given to the province. The climate was favourable, even luxurious. The land was soon seen to be singularly fertile, but the settlers were not all contented with the wealth which European cultivation could extract from the surface of its virgin soil. Mines of gold and silver, rich as those of

the neighbouring Mexico, were reported or fancied to be concealed beneath; and one wealthy speculator, named Crouzat, who had obtained the exclusive privilege of working them, had almost ruined himself in the attempt to discover them. He, or some of those who had been concerned in his enterprise and had shared his losses, sought to extricate themselves by inveigling others to take their place, and, as any undertaking which Law might engage in was sure to find supporters, he seemed an instrument ready made to their hands. Crouzat sent ingots of the precious metal to Paris, which he affirmed to have been dug out of the banks of the river, and easily persuaded him that nothing was required to render them as valuable as the richest parts of Mexico and Peru but sufficient capital and well-directed exertion. Law undertook to purchase his rights, and in the summer of 1717 proposed the establishment of a new company under the title of the Company of the West, or, as it was more commonly called, of the Mississippi, for which he found it easy to obtain the sanction of the State, and the support of thousands of subscribers. The Regent conferred on it privileges far more extensive than had been granted to Crouzat. They included the monopoly of the trade with Louisiana, and also with Canada, the right of farming the taxes and of coining money in those settlements, to which, in the course of the next two years, was added the permission to buy up the rights of the Senegal Company and of the East India Company; or, in other words, the monopoly of the whole foreign commerce of the nation.

The original capital of this new company was a hundred millions, in shares of 500 livres; but Law reserved a power of issuing new shares without any limit but that of his discretion as governor of the

company. The shares were taken up with avidity; and, as one of his regulations ordered that paper money only should be received in purchase of them, the demand for the notes of the bank, which were already at a premium, was stimulated to an extent which, if Law's calculations in other respects had been sound, would have realized his most sanguine expectations. He began without delay to collect a band of settlers to people the territory thus made over to him. He called them workmen, but in reality he was forced to put up with men like those who have been the foundation of more than one of our English colonies, the refuse of the gaols, the offscourings of the streets, convicts, and those who only escaped being convicts by embracing the alternative of quitting their country before trial. He was too anxious for a number of hands to afford to be particular in his choice. Even the most ruffianly would be able, under proper superintendence, to perform labour in the mines, and thus, of one class or another, he collected six thousand emigrants. When it became known that the first flotilla had set sail, that he himself had taken care that they should be properly supplied with mining tools and other necessary implements, and that the Elector Palatine and others of the petty German princes had promised to contribute some thousands more of their own subjects to people the settlement, the enthusiasm in favour of the project knew no bounds. Fresh issues of shares were announced from time to time, till the company could not deliver them fast enough for the applicants, nor the bank manufacture notes enough to purchase them. To extend its operations Law persuaded the Regent to make the bank a national or royal establishment. But this step had nearly proved fatal to himself. The Chancellor

guesseau was one of the few men in the kingdom who had resisted the universal frenzy in favour of the new schemes; and Law's influence had been sufficient to procure his dismissal, and the transference of seals to D'Argenson, the head of the police, who managed that department with consummate address, but who had neither extent of knowledge nor insight of character to qualify him for the dignified post to which he was thus promoted. The Parliament took up the cause of D'Aguesseau as the greatest affront their body had boasted for many generations, conceiving a proportionate ill-will to Law as author of his disgrace; and when, in August, 1718, an edict was prepared to authorize the purchase of Law's bank by the State, and submitted to them for consideration, they rejected it by a vast majority. They had learnt the real value of the Regent's promise to restore them the liberty of remonstrance. They were informed that the law was that eight days after an edict had been presented to them, whether they approved it or not, it would be taken to have been assented, and in an unusual access of fury they resolved to anticipate the arrival of the eighth day by an act which would render the registration to which they were to be compelled useless. The memoirs of Cardinal de Retz had lately been published, and were in every one's hands;* and the councillors flattered themselves that they had only now to show as much resolution as in the days of Broussel to become as formidable as then. They passed one or two votes of extreme violence and manifest invalidity, commanding suspension of operations by the bank, and prohi-

* St. Simon, xvi. 428.

biting all foreigners, whether naturalized or not, and however they might be authorized, from concerning themselves in the affairs of the revenue ; and then they designed to have Law arrested, prosecuted before them for the violation of this law, calculating that they could finish his trial in three hours, convict him, and hang him in the courtyard of the palace before his friends could interfere to save him, or even the Regent could learn what was being done.

Law, however, was well informed of their plans against him, and stood on his guard, keeping within doors till the edicts were registered, when the Parliament, finding itself completely baffled, sent to beg his pardon for its opposition to his schemes. And this defeat of the only party which had ventured to show itself unfavorable to them, increased the value put upon them by the world at large and the influence of the projector. By the end of the year, to possess shares in his Mississippi Company was looked upon as the only way to become rich. Shares had risen to twenty times their original value. Law himself had manifestly become enormously rich : he had bought magnificent houses in Paris, giving above half a million of livres for the house of the Count de Tessé, and a million for the Hôtel Mazarin, and he was known to be negotiating for landed estates in the country, and with the Duke de Sully for the Marquisate of Rosny, a title especially flattering to him as a financier from its similarity to that by which Sully had first been known, widely different as was his character from that of Henry IV.'s prudent minister. It was also known that similar prosperity had been reaped by all the original shareholders in proportion to the extent and boldness of their speculations, and a new name was invented for them. They were called Mississippi

Lords ;* they accepted the title with complacency, and the whole French world was now on its knees to Law to procure enrolment in this new nobility. It had been tolerably miscellaneous from the first. Of those already most conspicuous for the sudden change in their fortunes some were princes, some were footmen. Ridiculous stories were told of the embarrassments and awkwardness of the newly rich. One valet gave a grand dinner to his former master and a party of nobles (for to have made money on "the Mississippi" was a proof of genius that levelled all distinctions of birth), and more than once got up from table to hand wine to his guests. Another having bought a magnificent carriage, when it was brought round to his door, from the force of habit jumped up behind it, excusing himself afterwards to those who laughed at him on the plea that he wished to see that every part of the equipage was correctly finished. And anecdotes of equal absurdity were circulated of those who looked for equal good fortune from the new issues, if they could obtain a portion of them.

The great object of these aspirants was to obtain an interview with Law himself, who gradually became difficult of access, not from pride or vanity, for, while all around him were going mad, he maintained a remarkable degree of coolness and equanimity, but because no day could have been long enough to enable him to give even the briefest audience to all applicants. No rank, no profession, neither sex, was free from the prevailing insanity; St. Simon himself, Villeroi,

* Lacroix, i. 299. For these details and anecdotes I am chiefly indebted to this author's third chapter; to D'Anquetil, vol. iv. pp. 195-210; and to St. Simon's 17th and 18th volumes. The passages are too numerous to refer to separately, but I may especially point out xvii. 355, 411; xviii. 1, 9, 51, &c. See also Wood's "Life of Law," *passim*.

D'Aguesseau, De Torcy, and one or two more being mentioned as the only known instances of men with sufficient clearness of intellect to see through the delusion from the first, and sufficient firmness and honesty to abstain from profiting by the folly of others. But there were enough without them. Duchesses, and even abbesses, princes of the blood and princes of the church, marshals, prelates, courtiers, statesmen, and lawyers, thronged Law's ante-rooms from morning till night to beg for shares. Some bribed his servants for early admittance to his presence; others trusted to themselves, climbed his garden wall, and forced their way in at his windows; or even mounted to his house-top and dropped down the chimney into his private room. One lady of high rank, after many disappointments, hired a lot of idlers to raise the alarm of fire before a house at which he was dining, while she herself waylaid him as he with the rest of the company rushed out at the door. He ran back again, thinking even the danger of fire more tolerable than such incessant importunity. Another, still bolder and more successful, having for days driven up and down the street in front of his hotel, made her coachman upset her carriage the moment he was seen. And when, as a gentleman, he ran forward to assist her, he found that the only restorative which she needed was a portion of Mississippi stock, which he was forced to give her. For those who had obtained shares and trafficked in them, the principal mart was at first a narrow street known as the Rue de Quincampoix. The tenants of the houses in that thoroughfare were not those who profited least by the traffic. So great was the desire to be earliest in the morning at the scene of action, whether to sell or to buy, that every house was sublet at the most extrava-

gant prices. A tenant could pay his whole yearly rent by letting off a single room for a fortnight, and some houses, held on lease for 800 livres a year, fetched 10,000 livres a month, the hirer esteeming himself to have made as good a bargain as the letter. A cobbler in a small underground stall made 7000 francs a month by allowing speculators to write at his board, and furnishing them with pens and ink; while a poor deformed cripple, whose back was curved into a singularly flat hump, earned 50,000 francs during the season by making it a desk for those who could not find room at the cobbler's.* A new name, *agio*, was invented for the traffic, the shares themselves being called *actions*, and the probability of a rise or fall in the value supplanted every other topic of conversation.

At each absorption of a new company into the original speculation, and at each consequent issue of fresh shares, the desire for them and for the notes of the bank, with which alone they could be bought, increased; people not only preferred the notes to gold and silver, but the shares to their family houses and ancient estates, which they sold as fast as they could find purchasers. It was hardly likely that the bank or the company would be tired of issuing what customers grew daily more and more eager to obtain; and by the spring of 1720 the notes in circulation amounted to the almost incredible sum of 2500 millions of livres. Before that time Law had become a Minister of State. Whether he belonged originally to the Church of Scotland or to that of England is not recorded; but at the end of 1719 he yielded to the urgent request of the Regent to become a Catholic,

* "Mémoires de la Régence," ii. 131.

and the Abbé Tencin, the favourite confidant of Dubois, and the only ecclesiastic in the kingdom of equally bad character, was allowed the honour of converting him by his arguments, and then giving him formal admission into the Catholic Church. The moment that he was thus purged of his heresies, he was appointed Controller-General of the Finances; which, however, was hardly any augmentation of his real power. It has been mentioned that he procured the dismissal of the Chancellor. But his influence was not confined to his own Government. Because the English ambassador, Lord Stair, spoke slightly of his schemes, the king was forced to recall him, in spite of the services he had done the Regent at the time of the late king's death. In his new character Law began to enter into questions of general policy, one of his proposals being calculated to remove a great abuse and evil, if there had been time to carry it out, though personal motives had the greatest share in suggesting it to him. The Parliament had not been rendered more friendly to his schemes or to himself by the humiliation to which it had been compelled to submit; and, claiming the power to judge of the character of the edicts which were sent to it for registration, with a perseverance in no degree abated by its repeated discomfitures, it was unwearied in its attempts to throw obstacles in the way of his different measures. He judged, correctly enough, that the members were chiefly encouraged to this contumacious show of independence by the permanent possession of their offices, which were secured to them by the Paulette; and, as the stock of notes in the treasury was at this moment abundant, and the issue of more would cost nothing but the paper on which they were printed, he proposed to the Regent to buy their offices of them at cost

price by a compulsory sale, that he might then replace them by a reappointment of themselves or others, to hold their places at his pleasure, and thus be rendered subservient to, instead of a constant thorn in the side of the Government.

But though the Regent, Dubois, and the greater part of the Council warmly approved of this idea, there was no time to carry it out. The success which had attended Law's different schemes had been so utterly destitute of solid foundation, so unsupported by any sound principle or reasonable calculation, that it seems strange that it should have lasted so long as it did. But, in the beginning of 1720, people began to awake from their delusion. Nothing had yet been received from the American colony; but Law ventured to promise a dividend of 12 per cent.; issued a vast number of fresh shares; and, in return for the privilege of farming the taxes, agreed to lend the Regent, at the low interest of 3 per cent., the prodigious sum of 1600 millions; a sum far exceeding the whole amount of specie in the kingdom; while the bank offered to furnish individuals with small sums at even a lower rate. But while both companies were thus as fertile and as confident as ever in their promises, an undefined suspicion, originating apparently in no special cause, beyond the innate instinct which seems to prompt mankind in general to identify money with the precious metals, crept over the public mind. Individuals began to exchange their notes for gold. The movement, silent and unimportant at first, derived strength from an angry freak of the Prince de Conti. He had been one of those who had reaped the greatest profits from dealings in the shares of the company, and just at this time a fancy seized him to purchase more when there were none for him; for in

fact the Regent himself had appropriated the greater portion of the last issue; exasperated at his disappointment, he demanded coin for all the notes of the bank which he held, which were so enormous in number and amount that three waggons were required to carry the money. The example was catching; notes were brought in in numbers every day. The natives changed them to hoard up the gold they received against the day of difficulty which they began to forebode; but many foreign merchants also, having sold their goods for notes, carried them at once to the bank, and exported the cash, thus draining the country rapidly of its bullion. The demand increased, till it became a regular run on the bank; and the measures by which Law sought to arrest what was rapidly growing into a panic only aggravated it. The Regent was almost as anxious as himself to uphold the bank and the company, and readily issued every edict which he suggested: one limited the amount of notes for which payment in cash could be demanded; another forbade the accumulation of gold and silver plate; a third even made it criminal in any one to have more than a very small sum, five hundred livres, in coin in his possession.

But such tyrannical and unprecedented exertions of authority only increased the apprehensions which they were designed to allay. The run became more rapid, and more steady; the informers, a race of miscreants created by a clause in the last edict, which offered rich rewards to all whose evidence convicted any one of infringing it, by their treachery and rapacity disgusted even the Regent himself. By discouraging the informations, he rendered the edict nugatory. But he speedily replaced it with others that were still more damaging to the public credit.

One reduced the interest on all the debts of the State to 2 per cent. ; another, issued on the 22nd of May, ordained a gradual reduction of the value, both of the notes of the bank and of the shares of the company, which was to take place month by month, till they were lowered to half their original price. A third, issued the first week in July, forbade the possession or the sale of jewels, because, when men were forbidden to have cash in their houses, they hastened to purchase precious stones with their superfluity, as more easily transported and concealed than even coin.

These ordinances, and especially the second, which was meant to relieve the bank of half its liabilities, completed its ruin. The one circumstance which had given its notes the preference over coin, in the eyes of the multitude, was the pledge that they should be maintained at one invariable value ; a quality which, as had recently been shown, the gold and silver coinage wanted. But no measure, or series of measures, had ever diminished the value of livre or louis as this single edict lowered that of the paper. All confidence in the bank, in its prudence, in its honesty, in its solvency, and, as it was the Royal Bank, in the financial honour of the State, was swept away in a moment. The outcry was loud and universal. Every holder of notes, every shareholder, saw his wealth reduced one-half ; a fresh edict might bring it down to a quarter ; and the great majority of the holders, thinking it wisest to put up with their first loss, and to give no time to inflict a second and a heavier on them, brought in all their notes at once. The whole kingdom was not possessed of coin enough to meet the demand for the genuine notes ; but the presentation of them revealed the fact that there were also vast numbers of forged notes in circulation, without there

being any adequate means of distinguishing them from those which were genuine. The Regent was bewildered by the embarrassments which he saw around him, and terrified by the discontent. Unluckily, he was incapable of firmness in any path. He revoked the last edict; dismissed D'Aguesseau, by whose advice it had been issued; and, after an ineffectual attempt to induce St. Simon to take the seals, though the duke, as he represented to him, was utterly ignorant of law, he restored them to D'Aguesseau. He was greatly puzzled how to treat Law himself. He secretly believed himself to have been greatly benefited by his operations; and his own mother, his cousin the Duke de Bourbon, and many others who had influence with him, were still inclined, and indeed interested, to uphold the great projector. At the same time, the Parliament, which saw a better opportunity than ever to raise itself by the general discontent, was vehement in its denunciations of him, and fertile and pertinacious in every kind of opposition, or show of opposition, which, in reality, was all that was in its power. The Regent was alternately influenced by both. One evening he took Law with him to the opera, to make a public display of his confidence in him. On the 27th, in less than thirty-six hours afterwards, he dismissed him from his office of Controller-General. The next day he refused to see him; but on the 29th, M. Sassenaye, the chief officer of his household, introduced him into the palace by a back-door; and after that, for some weeks, he transacted business with him as usual.

Meanwhile, the discontent and alarm rather increased the traffic in both notes and shares. The Mississippi had lately exchanged its name of the Company of the West for that of the Company of the

Indies. But it had got rid of none of its liabilities by the alteration; and the shares continued to fall; but the manifest resolution of the Government to uphold them made it so doubtful how long their fall would continue, and how low a point it would reach, that the uncertainty gave rise to as much speculation as when the only doubt was how high they would rise. To support the bank, a hundred millions of Mississippi shares, which had been bought in the young king's name, were now placed to its credit. To support the company, another edict was issued at the beginning of July, granting it the monopoly of traffic with India, on condition of its assuming the responsibility of paying off 600,000,000 of bank-notes within the year. The Parliament refused to register it; but in this instance, the Regent was determined to be obeyed: he prohibited it from holding any further meetings; and having brought up some bodies of troops to Paris to overawe the citizens, banished it to Pontoise. He had good reason to be offended with it; but so incurably timid and vacillating had he become, that even while issuing the edict which bore the appearance of punishment, he secretly presented the president with a hundred thousand crowns to keep a table for the councillors. They spent the money on a series of entertainments and festivities; and, as their new quarters were within reach of Paris, a visit to the exiles became one of the most fashionable amusements of the capital.

But no edicts or measures of Government could long support edifices so tottering as the two companies. In less than a fortnight after the Regent issued his prohibition of jewellery (than which none could have been more at variance with the tastes of his countrymen or his own), another ordinance authorized the bank

to suspend cash payments altogether. It was a matter of course that on this the notes fell more rapidly than ever. The place of traffic had been removed from the Rue de Quincampoix, partly because from the narrowness of the road people had more than once been trampled to death, and partly because an atrocious crime had given the street an ill name. A foreign noble, Count Horn, the heir of an illustrious name in the history of Flemish independence, which, however, he had dishonoured by a career of low profligacy, having allured a broker to a small eating-house in the street on pretence of buying a number of shares of him, had murdered him, and possessed himself of the shares. He was seized, convicted, and, though among his noble kinsmen he counted the Regent himself, was broken on the wheel in the same week which had witnessed his crime. The Place Vendôme was the next exchange, and the facilities of access to and movement in that magnificent square increased the traffic further by the facilities which it offered. Presently, when the crowd became so great as to block up even that spacious thoroughfare, the Prince de Carignan, who had been a large and not unsuccessful speculator in the palmy days of the companies, devised a plan to enrich himself by their fall. He procured an order to transfer the mart to his own house, the Hôtel de Soissons, and for the convenience of the jobbers erected a few little wooden lodges in different parts of his garden, which, as long as the fever lasted, brought him in a rent of 300,000 livres a month. Unluckily for him, it was exhausted before the end of the year. Before the end of July Law was in such general disfavour that he was insulted in the streets; his carriage, even when his wife and daughter were in it, was pelted with stones; and his life was supposed to be in peril,

till the Regent, who at first had been contented with appointing an officer of the guard to protect him, gave him shelter in his own palace. He was, indeed, bound to provide for him, for it was afterwards seen that he had issued shares and notes to the amount of several hundred millions, of which neither bank nor company had any knowledge. But, as the year drew to a close, he began to doubt even his own power to save him. Expedient after expedient was tried to uphold the credit of the bank, and the Government Annuities were offered to the holders of notes, either in perpetuity or for life, but the price tempted but few. At last, in November, an edict fixed a day after which the notes should cease to be legal tender for any purpose, and the Regent advised Law to fly. He fled first to Brussels, then to Venice, where nine years afterwards he died in a state little removed from poverty. The sincerity of his own belief in his different schemes is proved by the circumstance that he had invested all the profits which he had made, which at one time had been almost incalculable, within the kingdom. He had laid nothing by in foreign countries against a rainy day, and, therefore, all his property was now in the grasp of the sufferers by his different schemes, for whose benefit it was confiscated. The bank was at an end, and the measures adopted to wind up its affairs were, in fact, acts of bankruptcy. The brothers Pâris were again employed to deal with the holders of its notes, as they had formerly dealt with the bonds possessed by the fundholders. By cancelling a large portion, and funding the rest at a ridiculously low rate of interest, which, however, the holders were compelled to accept, they reduced the obligation of the State on that account to a comparatively moderate amount. With the shares of the company they

dealt even more rigorously, reducing them to two-fifths of their number, and to less than a twentieth of their original value; and then, having broken off all connexion of the company with the State, they left it to subsist as a body of private traders, who continued their commercial transactions, the chief scene of which was India, for many years. Thousands of individuals had been ruined; the Regent and his administration were dishonoured in the eyes of all Europe, and a deep and lasting distrust, contempt, and hatred, not only of their existing rulers, but of the whole system of government, was implanted in the nation at large, which the subsequent events and character of the reign were not calculated to abate.*

While these events were taking place in the nation at large, the Court was not free from troubles of its own. Besides the quarrel between the duke-peers and the parliament about the marks of respect to which the former laid claim, other disputes about the precedence to which those nobles who were and those who were not peers were respectively entitled, were carried on at this time with great vehemence; and another, respecting the privileges which had been granted by the late king to his illegitimate children, first threw the whole Court into confusion, and subsequently led to a very dangerous conspiracy. Louis XIV., as has been mentioned before, had raised the Duke de Maine, his brother the Count de Toulouse, and their sister whom he had compelled the Duke d'Orleans to marry, to the rank and rights of

* "On ne s'étonne plus qu'elle [la nation] ait pris son gouvernement en haine et en mépris, et qu'elle l'ait attaqué pendant le reste du siècle avec les armes du ridicule, jusqu'au moment où elle se sentit assez forte pour le renverser."—Sismondi, viii. 44.

princes of the blood royal. But this measure, which had no precedent to authorize it, had caused great indignation. The genuine princes disdained to have the children of Madame de Montespan put on a level with them: the nobles of the first rank were still more dissatisfied at seeing them raised above themselves: and both princes and nobles sought relief from the Regent. The princes Bourbon, Charolais, and Conti presented one petition to him, begging him to abrogate the late king's edict as illegal; and the nobles approached him with a second, depending on the success of the first, and arguing that, if the privileges of royal blood were taken from Maine and his brethren, they could no longer be entitled to precedence as a class over themselves, but could only claim to be considered as ordinary nobles, ranking in the general body according to the date of their creation. The dissensions and wranglings were long and fierce. The princes who were attacked made but little stand in defence of their position; but the Duchess de Maine, a princess of the house of Condé, was energetic and furious in support of it; and avowed openly that rather than lose it she would set fire to the kingdom at its centre and all its corners.* Her vehemence was disregarded; the only person except Dubois who had any influence with the Regent, St. Simon, was unwearied in advocating the cause of his own order; and, besides that, the Regent hated Maine, and was himself jealous of the honour which the late king's will had conferred on him. He attributed to him and to his party the libels which were daily circulated in the capital against himself. To those, indeed, which denounced his licentiousness,

* St. Simon, xiv. 461.

even to those which openly imputed to him the foulest debaucheries with his own daughter, he was indifferent and callous. But when Lagrange-Chancel, a ribald hireling poet of the lowest class of ability, in a satire to which he gave the name of the *Philippic*, charged him with a design to poison his young ward the king, and to possess himself of the throne, he was moved even to tears; declared that it was too bad, and resolved to avenge himself on those whom he believed to have been the instigators of so foul a calumny.

It was the end of the summer of 1718; there were several affairs of importance which it was necessary to settle, and he resolved to dispose of them all at the same time. If Maine and his brother, the legitimated princes, as they were called, to distinguish them from those who were legitimate, were his personal enemies, the Parliament was no less the enemy of his Government. It had refused registration to several of his edicts, issued to give effect to Law's different measures; and had passed votes of its own in opposition to and condemnation of them. He likewise felt himself stronger than usual, because Dubois had just arrived with the news of the signature of the treaty with England (the *Quadruple Alliance* as it was now called, from the accession of Holland and the emperor), which relieved him from all anxiety about foreign affairs, and which was highly popular in Paris; and he determined therefore to strike down both his foes at once. St. Simon doubted the prudence of the plan: he recollected the *Fronde* during the last minority; and was apprehensive of another civil war if Maine and Toulouse should throw themselves on the Parliament, and make common cause with that body: but he was overborne by the vehemence of Bourbon,

who insisted on the absolute necessity, in the interest of the princes of genuine royalty, and even of the Regent himself, of removing Maine from his post about the king before he should attain his majority. The Regent was, as usual, persuaded by the loudest and most pertinacious speaker; and, as soon as Dubois arrived, he threw his interest into the same scale. It was resolved to take both parties by surprise, so as to give them no time to combine for assistance. On the 26th of August, at six in the morning, the Regent summoned the Council of the Regency to meet at eight, and the Parliament to attend the king at a Bed of Justice at ten, and surrounded the palace with a strong body of troops. As soon as the council met, he recommended Maine and Toulouse to retire, because there might be some resolutions adopted which they would not like, and then proceeded to make the most of the two hours. The Chancellor opened the proceedings with a speech denouncing the misuse made by the Parliament of the liberty of remonstrance which had lately been restored to it; and the council passed an unanimous vote to deprive it of any such privilege for the future. The Regent himself pronounced his decision on the petition of the nobles against the legitimated princes: revoking the honours granted to them by the late king, as contrary to precedent, and unjust to the nobles and real princes of the blood. And then Bourbon claimed that, as Maine was no longer a royal prince, the superintendence of the king's education should be taken from him, and transferred to himself. This also was granted by the Regent. At least half the council in their hearts disapproved of the degradation of Maine and his brother, though more for the sake of Louis XIV. than for their own; but none dared to object to it.

And now the only voice raised against this second step, which transferred the care of the young king to a prince of profligate character and brutal disposition, was that of Villeroi, and he only ventured to point out that now every arrangement made by the late king was overthrown, and to express his pity for the Duke de Maine. "Marshal," replied the Regent, "Maine is my own brother-in-law ; but I prefer an open to a secret enemy."*

By this time the hour had come for the assembling of the Parliament. The councillors, divining that no good was intended them, endeavoured to interest the citizens in their cause, and, with the air of martyrs, marched in one long procession, on foot, through the streets to the palace ; but those of the Parisians who remembered the Fronde at all, remembered it as a warning. The general tenour of the events of the last reign had been to reduce the Parliament to insignificance : and it had not made any such use of the nominal powers which the Regent had restored to it, its deliberations had not been so distinguished by either ability or consistency, as to revive the respect in which it had once been held, or to restore it to its former influence. D'Argenson, who bore personal ill-will to the First President Lamoignon, made them a speech, in which he recapitulated, with increased acrimony, the charges which he had made against them in the Council of Regency, and then announced to them the decrees which the council had adopted. Lamoignon said a few words of feeble remonstrance, which none of his colleagues standing around, with downcast and terrified countenances, dared to second. And when the Chancellor, in a loud and angry voice,

* St. Simon, xvii. 118.

commanded them in the king's name to register the edicts instantly, they obeyed without another word. To complete their subjection, Dubois, for he, in fact, was now sole minister, a day or two afterwards arrested one or two of the presidents and members who had been most forward in their opposition, and despatched them to different prisons in the provinces. And it was now that, thinking that giving additional concentration to the Government would add strength to it, he induced the Regent to suppress the administrative councils which he had established three years before, and which had been found to be productive of great delays in the transaction of business; and to restore the old system of secretaries of state.

But Dubois' own inclination led him to occupy himself with foreign rather than with domestic affairs. The cardinal point of his policy, as we have seen, was the alliance with England, from which an attempt had been made in the preceding year to detach France by the most remarkable sovereign of the age, Peter the Czar of Russia; who, in the summer of 1717, visited Paris for the express purpose of pressing his own views on the Regent. In the reign of King William, he had spent some months in England, and had desired to cross over to France at that time; but his proposal had been declined by Louis XIV.* Now, however, that the offer had been renewed, the Regent accepted it with eagerness; not from any views of statesmanship, but with the idea that the arrival of a stranger, who was hardly more notorious for the greatness of his genius than for the singularity of his habits, would interest and amuse the Parisians, and so for a while divert their attention from his own go-

* St. Simon, ii. 101.

vernment and debaucheries. The visit, however, scarcely answered the purpose of either the visitor or his host. Peter prided himself on his disregard of royal magnificence and court ceremony, rejected the apartments which had been prepared for him at the Louvre as too splendid;* and, though it was nine in the evening when he reached Paris, started off at once to a private house, the Hôtel de Lesdiguières, where he hoped to be more plainly lodged. And when at last he had satisfied himself on that matter, he regulated his movements solely by his own pleasure and curiosity. The Regent, who was convinced that his private interests and those of the country were concerned in maintaining friendship with England, evaded his attempts to discuss political subjects. And, as soon as the Czar found that he must abandon his hopes of changing his views on that head, he paid him very little attention, showing great indifference to the sumptuous entertainments which were prepared for him; and marking, by the ostentatious condescension with which he treated the Regent, his sense of the vast difference which existed between their respective ranks. He interchanged visits more than once with the king, whom, to the surprise and amusement of the courtiers, he took up in his arms and kissed over and over again, as a little child, praising his attractive features and kingly self-possession. But his chief occupation was visiting all the public establishments, especially those at which manufactures of any kind were carried on. He remained in Paris about six weeks; and in the last week of his stay he went to St. Cyr to see Madame de Maintenon. She had expected him long before, and was not well pleased at

* St. Simon, xv. 81, *et seq.*

his visit being so long deferred, and being then paid in a manner which made it look as if his object was as much to see the school as to pay his respects to herself. She received him in bed with all the window-curtains and nearly all the bed-curtains drawn. Without any ceremony he threw them all back with his own hand; then, sitting down on the foot of the bed, looked steadily at her, and asked what was the matter with her; and having received for answer, "extreme old age," stared at her for a minute or two more, and then rose and walked off without another word.*

The chief object for which the Regent had allied himself with England was so notoriously, in the event of the death of his infant sovereign, to secure his own succession to the throne, in preference to Philip of Spain, that it could hardly fail to give umbrage to the court of Madrid. Spain, under the prudent and energetic administration of Cardinal Alberoni, who had for the last two years been prime minister, was retrieving its resources and recovering vigour in every department with great celerity and steadiness, and, in his opinion, only required five years of rest to be re-established in all its former prosperity and power. But the animosities of the king, the Regent, and the emperor daily endangered the permanence of peace. Philip V. hated both the Regent and the emperor with a personal ill-will, which was fully returned by both. We have seen how he and D'Orleans regarded one another as possibly rival claimants of the French throne. And a similar reason separated him from Charles III. That sovereign, still pertinaciously clinging to his old

* St. Simon says that neither spoke a single word: "Ni lui dit pas un mot, ni elle à lui." But most accounts give the question and answer related in the text. See Lacretelle, i. 200.

pretensions, refused to acknowledge him as King of Spain, and persevered in his own assumption of that title; and Philip yet more unreasonably withheld his recognition of Charles as emperor, and still spoke of him as the archduke. Their enmity was embittered by the circumstance that Charles was in possession of rich Italian provinces, which had for many ages belonged to Spain: and in the course of this same year a combination of circumstances led the two potentates into war, which France, with the support of England and Holland, in vain endeavoured at first to avert, and afterwards to terminate by their joint mediation.

When Louis XIV. took leave of Philip on his departure for his new dominions, he gave utterance to the anticipations which he had formed of the benefit which France would derive from having a prince of her own blood on the Spanish throne, in the well-known boast that "there were no longer any Pyrenees;" so identical from thenceforth, as he expected, were to be the views and measures of the two governments. His pride in the aggrandizement of his family misled his ordinary sagacity; since, except so far as all nations are at all times really interested in the maintenance of peace, no two countries can have such an identity of objects and principles as he expected to prevail in France and Spain. Least of all can those the character of whose peoples is so wholly different. But in the present instance there can be little doubt that France was as deeply concerned as Spain in preventing the Germans from establishing a preponderating influence in Italy. And, had not all other feelings in the Regent's mind been overpowered by his jealousy of Philip, he would have seen this to be the case. As it was, he displayed his habitual inconsistency as strikingly as ever in his conduct towards Spain and

her sovereign. Being really desirous to preserve peace, he was apparently sincere in the instructions which he gave to Dubois, to use every effort to induce England and Holland to combine with him in an effectual mediation between Spain and the empire. But, almost at the same time, he began to intrigue with a party among the Spanish nobles, who were engaged in a conspiracy to carry off the queen, who governed the king, and Alberoni, who governed the queen, to their native countries in the north of Italy; and he actually moved an army, under the command of Berwick, towards the Spanish frontier, that it might be at hand to support the conspirators when they should begin to put their machinations in execution.

Alberoni was too much on his guard, and they never made the attempt; but he knew well what had been designed, and retaliated on D'Orleans, when the Bretons rose in insurrection, by giving open encouragement and assistance to the chiefs of the revolt; and by entering cordially into a conspiracy which was set on foot by the Duchess de Maine to avenge the degradation of her husband from the eminence to which his father had raised him. She had made no secret of her deep indignation; she had tried in vain by bitter reproaches to stimulate her husband to action, telling him that as it was she had nothing left but the disgrace of being his wife. And when she found that he was too cold-blooded, or too prudent, or too timid, she took the matter into her own hands; formed a complicated plot, the issue of which, she felt confident, would be the overthrow of D'Orleans, and his ejection from the Regency; and when in her own mind she had arranged all the details, she opened her project to the Prince de Cellamare, the Spanish ambassador at Paris, soliciting his concurrence and the co-operation of his

master, Philip. She proposed that a powerful body among the French nobles should sign a requisition to convoke the States-General, which should be presented, not to the actual Regent, but to Philip, as the prince who had the best right to the regency. That the States-General would depose D'Orleans from the regency, and appoint Philip in his stead, she had no doubt whatever: while, in case there should be any unexpected difficulty in carrying such a vote, a subsidiary plot was arranged, to seize the Regent and carry him off to Toledo, one of the conspirators, the Count de Laval, offering to execute this part of the enterprise even while he remained in Paris. Another branch of the plot was directed to raising a revolt in one of the most important provinces of the kingdom. There had been discontent in Brittany for some years, arising partly from distress, and partly from indignation at the insolence with which the king's representative, the Marshal de Montesquiou, treated the states of the province. And the conspirators now suggested to Alberoni that if Philip promised the Bretons a restoration of their ancient privileges, such as they had enjoyed on their first union to the monarchy in the time of Louis XII., when he should become the Regent,* they would rise as one man against the existing government. Cellamare undertook that his master should do all that was required of him, but Alberoni, though equally desirous to further the plot, saw the necessity of proceeding with caution. He desired to have a list of the nobles who were prepared to sign such a requisition; not one could be induced to come forward: he required a list of the regiments and brigades which might be counted on to support the States-General in the anticipated vote; the names

* St. Simon, xvii. 396.

of a few half-pay officers were all that could be furnished. And while he was thus asking questions which it was difficult to answer, a man named Buvat, a clerk in the royal library at Paris, whom Cellamare employed to copy some of his despatches, having learnt the secret, revealed the whole affair to Dubois. Dubois took his measures with sagacity and promptitude. He kept the information which he had received entirely secret; as part of it led him to believe that the Abbé Portocarrero, just on the point of starting for Madrid, would be the bearer of letters from Cellamare to Alberoni, he caused him to be arrested at Poitiers; and, when his carriage was searched, documents were found fully corroborating Buvat's intelligence. Having now irresistible proofs of Cellamare's connexion with the plot, Dubois arrested him also, and seized his papers; justifying to the ambassadors of the other powers his disregard of the ordinary privileges of the diplomatic body by the assertion that the prisoner had been detected in a conspiracy against the State. There was some danger that Alberoni might retaliate by laying hands on the Duke de St. Aignan, the French minister at Madrid; so, while issuing orders for the seizure of Portocarrero, Dubois sent him notice of what was intended, with orders to instantly return to France. St. Aignan conducted his movements with great address: as Alberoni endeavoured civilly to detain him by postponements of his audience of leave, he quitted Madrid, as he had given him notice that he would, without waiting to see the king. Before he reached the frontier he received news of Cellamare's apprehension; and, judging that he had no time to lose, he quitted his retinue, and, with his duchess, mounted on a pair of mules and rode forward, leaving behind two trustworthy

servants to personate himself and his wife in their state-carriage. Before they got to Pampeluna the servants were stopped by the Spanish officers, who mistook them for their masters ; and they, profiting by the blunder, pressed forward, scarcely halting till they had crossed the frontier, and reached St. Pied de Port, a French town on the northern side of the Pyrenees. Dubois had thus, while delivering his own blow, parried that aimed by Alberoni ; and the moment he heard of St. Aignan's safety he arrested the whole body of conspirators in France, and declared war against Spain. The campaign opened in May, but it was little better than a farce. Philip put himself at the head of his army, but he had so large a number of troops employed in Sicily, that the whole force which he could assemble for the defence of the kingdom did not exceed 15,000 men ; while 40,000 French, under the command of the Duke of Berwick, were at Bayonne, preparing to cross the frontier, and an English fleet was being equipped to co-operate with them. Philip placed more reliance on the divisions which he might create among his enemies than in his own strength. Among the English, by furnishing the Pretender with a squadron to escort the Duke of Ormond and a body of Irish troops to Scotland, where they expected to be joined by the Jacobite chieftains ; among the French, by appealing to the soldiers in a proclamation which asserted the superiority of his own right to the regency, as nearer in blood to the young king than the Duke d'Orleans. But a storm scattered the squadron which was despatched against England ; and it was so clear that Philip could by no possibility discharge the duties of the regency which he claimed, that his assertion of his right made no impression on the French soldiers. Berwick having crossed

the Bidassoa close to its mouth, took Fontarabia and St. Sebastian, and overran Guipuscoa without resistance; the English burnt some ships at Passages and Santona, and took Vigo; while both France and England exerted themselves to procure the dismissal of Alberoni from the Spanish government with even more vigour than they pursued their military operations. Their success in the latter secured it in the former object. Dubois had bribed Daubenton, Philip's confessor, who, being aware that Alberoni was proposing to replace him by one of his Italian countrymen, co-operated with them zealously. Lord Peterborough engaged the Duke of Parma, the brother of Philip's second wife, to add his influence; and Philip himself, disgusted at the disasters of his first campaign, was, even without such pressure, inclined to visit his vexation on the Cardinal. In December he deprived him of all his employments, and banished him from the kingdom; and at the same time signified his willingness to make peace, which in the first month of the new year, was concluded on the condition of his acceding to the quadruple treaty, the most important article of which, as it affected himself, was that which involved a renewal of his renunciation of every claim to the French crown.

In the only warlike operation of his regency D'Orleans was thus entirely triumphant. His treatment of those who had conspired against him was even more to his honour. The conspiracy had much in all its circumstances to exasperate him personally; not only his power, but his liberty, and perhaps his life, had been threatened by it. More than one of the conspirators had shown himself to be animated by personal enmity towards him; and the hopes which had been held out to the malcontents of Brittany,

went almost to the dismemberment of the kingdom, or at least to the reduction of it to the weakness of the middle ages, when each great province was practically almost independent of the central government. Yet, with the exception of four Breton gentlemen, whose eagerness for the success of this part of the plot seemed to require an example to be made of them, lest the same idea should take possession of the minds of other provincials, not one conspirator suffered any more severe punishment than a short imprisonment. Maine himself appeared to have had no knowledge whatever of his wife's machinations; and even she, who had been allowed to choose her own place of confinement, was soon released. She was compelled, indeed, to sign a confession of her guilt; but when she endeavoured in an interview with the Regent to explain her conduct, perhaps to entreat forgiveness, he cut her short with the assurance that "All was forgotten."

Having thus pardoned the head, he could hardly be more severe to the inferior traitors. The guilt of the Duke de Richelieu was particularly heinous, because he, being governor of Bayonne, had engaged to betray that important fortress to the enemies of the country. And he had committed himself so far in other respects, that the Regent declared that, if he had four heads, he had evidence enough against him to take them all; and he had also personal reason to be offended with him, for the duke was the most successful gallant of his day, and the Regent's daughter, Mademoiselle de Valois, had fallen so violently in love with him, that she rejected the hand of the Duke of Modena, to her father's great disappointment.* Yet the only condi-

* Lacretelle, i. 214; St. Simon, xviii. 124.

tion which he attached to his pardon was, that he should no longer encourage his daughter in her obstinacy. He did not even wish, when he could avoid it, to become acquainted with the names of all who had been in the plot, or with all their actions and engagements, showing a generosity which his courtiers could not always understand. Among the plotters had been an Abbé Brigaut, who, during a short absence from Paris, had entrusted his papers to a gentleman named Menil. When the conspiracy was discovered, Menil, coupling it with the abbé's departure from Paris, which had been sudden, and with other circumstances, conjectured that he must have been implicated in the treason, and that the papers in his custody might have reference to it. He opened them, and found his suspicions justified. The contents would have compromised many persons, but as they revealed nothing which in his judgment threatened the personal safety of the king, or the independence of the country, he took it upon himself to burn them; and, when he was examined on the subject, avowed both the act and the motive for it. The Chancellor, who conducted the investigation, committed him to the Bastille; and hearing of his disgrace, a namesake, a certain Marquis de Menil, one of the hangers-on of the court, hastened to the Regent to assure him that he was no relation nor even acquaintance of the prisoner. He found, to his surprise, that it would not have hurt him if he had been his brother. The Regent heard him calmly, and replied: "So much the worse for you, marquis, for Chevalier Menil is a very fine fellow."* And in the same spirit, in the course of a few months, he pardoned the whole

* Madame de Staal, ii. 67.

body of conspirators, and, as he said, forgot their treason.

It was well for him that he had so rapidly crushed both his domestic enemies; for, at the beginning of the year 1720, a terrible calamity fell upon the southern provinces, which, if there had been any divisions in the kingdom, might have afforded a dangerous opening to any who might have wished to take advantage of them. A vessel arrived at Marseilles from the Levant deeply infected with the plague. The existence of such a disease on board was unknown to the municipal authorities, and some of the crew who were permitted to land introduced it into the city. It spread with fearful rapidity, and proved of an unusually fatal character. The patients died by scores, by hundreds, by thousands. The disease seemed completely to baffle the skill of the physicians; despair took possession of all, and aggravated the horrors of the bodily malady by the same levity, the same cruel selfishness and recklessness, which Thucydides, Boccaccio, and Defoe, in different ages of the world, had witnessed and denounced in their own cities. Some refused all aid to the sufferers, even to their nearest relatives; some abandoned themselves to revelry and licentiousness: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;" while crime stalked through the streets unchecked and unpunished; felons and murderers plundered and slaughtered with impunity; few caring to struggle for the preservation of their lives, and still less for their property, when life itself was so precarious. There were some honourable exceptions: two of the civic magistrates, M. Estelle and M. Moustier, with a private gentleman named Rose, disregarding all fear of infection, went about the city, searching out the sick, bearing them relief where they could, and where they could not, at least

consolation and encouragement. Above all, the bishop, Belzunce, a prelate of noble family, a nephew of the Duke de Lauzun, distinguished himself by his heroic self-devotion to his flock. He not only lavished all his wealth to procure food and medicine for the sick, but he traversed the city day and night, praying for and with them; nor during the whole period of the calamity, and it lasted many months, did any one seek his help in vain. It is melancholy to be forced to add, that this fearless and energetic humanity was combined with the most unyielding intolerance. Belzunce was a Jesuit, so vehement in support of his order, that, when the disease first fell upon the city, he pronounced it to be a judgment of Heaven to chastise a populace who were not favorable to the Bull *Unigenitus* and the constitution; and when the members of the different religious establishments, which were numerous at Marseilles, stimulated by his example, offered themselves as his assistants, he rigorously refused the aid of any body or individual whom he suspected of Jansenism. It must be added, as a contrast to this narrow-minded perversity of the virtuous and self-denying prelate, that the Regent himself, in spite of his habitual thoughtlessness and selfishness, was deeply moved by the misery of the people, and made vigorous, lavish, and judicious efforts to relieve it; sending vast quantities of provisions to the city and district, a numerous staff of physicians, and, what was almost equally useful, a body of troops, whose commander had authority to supersede for a time the municipal magistracy, and to enforce obedience to the regulations calculated to check the spread of the infection. But the summer was nearly over before the physicians could pronounce the disease to be eradicated; and the lowest estimate of its ravages

placed the number of those who had been carried off by it at ninety thousand people.

It must have strengthened the belief of the good bishop in his own doctrine that the cessation of the pestilence was followed almost immediately by the acceptance by the French church of the Bull which had so long formed a subject of dispute with Rome. D'Aguesseau had lately been restored to the chancellorship, and he, and the Cardinal de Noailles, who had been the leaders of the opposition to the Bull, in their eagerness for peace had persuaded themselves that some slight verbal modifications and qualifications of its expressions, to which its champions were not unwilling to consent, justified them in withdrawing their objections. The cardinal accepted it on behalf of the Church : and the Chancellor prevailed on the Great Council to register it ; though some of the minority pointedly rebuked him for his inconsistency. He ventured to reproach one of the councillors, named Perelle, who still inveighed against it, for his vehemence, and asked him where he got such pernicious principles and arguments. " I found them," replied the orator, " in the pleadings of a late chancellor, M. d'Aguesseau."* But a taunt, however biting, could not convert the disputant's colleagues to his views. When the Great Council had registered the Bull, the Parliament was persuaded to similar obedience by a threat of further banishment to Blois if it refused, and a promise of pardon and restoration to Paris if it consented. And on the 4th of December the last act necessary to give validity to the Bull, and the constitution which depended on it, was performed. But it failed to give peace to the Church, since the qua-

* Lacretelle, i. 347.

lifying phrases, with which the Bull had been finally explained, gave the Jansenists and its other opponents a plea for continuing to uphold their own views on the subject both of the doctrine of the Church and of the liberties of the French clergy. And the means by which and the objects for which the acceptance of the Bull had been secured, gave a heavier wound to religion itself than could be salved over by any apparent concord of sects or establishment of orthodoxy.

For D'Aguesseau and Noailles had been but puppets in the hands of Dubois, and the real moving cause had been the furtherance of the private interests of the minister himself. No one had profited by Law's bank or company so largely as he: and as each augmentation of his wealth and power only bred in him an appetite for more, he soon conceived the idea of equalling Richelieu and Mazarin in rank as well as in authority, and of becoming a cardinal. As he made no secret of his views, they soon came to the ears of the Regent, who treated them sometimes with ridicule, sometimes with indignation. One day he said that Dubois must be crazy to think of such a thing, and that he himself should be mad to permit it: another day he declared that if he moved in the matter he would throw him into a dungeon for the rest of his life.* But his old tutor was little disturbed by such threats; he knew his own influence and his pupil's weakness, and moved on with characteristic steadiness, craft, and impudence, step by step towards his end. The archbishopric of Cambrai was the richest piece of ecclesiastical preferment in the French church, and at the beginning of 1720 the

* St. Simon, xvii. 218. "Le Régent me protesta qu'il le ferait mettre dans un cachôt s'il osait jamais faire un pas vers la pourpre."—Ib., 222.

holder of it, the Cardinal de la Tremoille, brother of the Princess Orsini, died at Rome. Dubois resolved to become archbishop of Cambrai, though he was not yet in holy orders at all. And there can be no clearer proof of the flagitious infamy of his character than the circumstance that he felt abashed even with such a prince as the Regent, and did not venture openly to prefer his petition till he had broken the ice by a hint or two. Waiting an opportunity when D'Orleans seemed in an especially good humour, he said "he had had a pleasant dream." As he was not asked the subject of it, he presently added, "he had dreamt that he was archbishop of Cambrai." The Regent, who now saw what was coming, spun round on his heel, and made no reply. Having begun, Dubois determined to go on and finish the matter at once. And after a little stammering and circumlocution, plainly asked, "why, now that his royal highness could make his fortune by a word, he should hesitate to do so?" The prince told him plainly that the scandal caused by his profligacy and notorious irreligion was too great. He urged that other bishops had been as bad, an assertion which, though not quite true, was unhappily not without some plausibility; and indeed the deceased archbishop, whom Dubois desired to succeed, had had but few clerical virtues.* D'Orleans, who was not used to refuse any one who pressed a suit with importunity, and least of all Dubois, now tried to turn the matter off with a pun.†

* St. Simon says: "Son ignorance, ses mœurs, l'indécence de sa vie . . . le désordre de sa conduite, ne pouvaient être couverts par son nom, sa dignité, son emploi."—xviii. 104. For the circumstances attending the elevation of Dubois, see ib. 139, *et seq.*

† "Mais tu es un sacre, et qui est l'autre sacre qui voudra te sacrer?" ib. 140; *sacre* here being equivalent to *fripon*. It must be added, however, that Lacretelle disbelieves St. Simon's story, apparently on insufficient

It amounted to an assertion that no bishop could be found bad enough to consecrate him. And his witicism ensured his defeat. Dubois was too skilful a disputant not to see that the disproof of the assertion would carry the appearance of a refutation of the whole argument. He replied in a moment that "if that was all the difficulty, he could find one in a minute, the Regent's chief almoner, Tressan, bishop of Nantes, who was in the next room," and at once knelt to return thanks for the appointment. The Regent was very angry, feeling himself caught in a trap, but was too much puzzled to make any reply. Dubois rushed off to the Bishop of Nantes, got his promise, returned in a few minutes, and, skipping about the room in high glee, told the Regent the bishop had promised to obey him; and the Regent, thinking it the least trouble to yield, yielded.

But even then the candidate's difficulties were not over. The Cardinal de Noailles, as archbishop of Paris, positively, though courteously, refused him the dimissory letters necessary to authorize any bishop to ordain him. And the courage as well as the propriety of the act was so universally applauded that it seemed highly probable that any one else to whom application could be made would follow the cardinal's example. There was perhaps only one who would not have done so. But the Archbishop of Rouen, the brother of Marshal Besons, was a mere creature of the Regent, as of any one else in authority. Pontoise was in his diocese, and treating that town as the residence of the council while the Parliament held

grounds: "L'entretien qu'on suppose les présente tous deux (the Regent and Dubois) sous un rapport si vil qu'on ne conçoit pas que l'un ou l'autre ait pu le raconter," i. 340, note.

its sittings there, he furnished Dubois with the requisite sanction, and Tressan ordained him sub-deacon, deacon, and priest at the same service. Even the most indifferent were shocked at such a desecration of holy orders; and those who had studied Catholic doctrine or ecclesiastical history felt his language on the subject an almost greater profanation, when, in reply to the sneers with which his new promotion was met, he justified it by the precedent of St. Ambrose, who had been nominated archbishop of Milan even before he had received the sacrament of baptism.* But he and his master had gone too far to consider now to whom they gave offence of that kind. And presently the Regent degraded his own rank by attending in state at his consecration as archbishop; a condescension which was rendered still more dishonourable by the cause which immediately led to it. St. Simon had remonstrated against it with his usual frankness, as a violation of all existing rule and precedent, which forbade the attendance of the princes of the blood at such ceremonies; representing to the Regent that he had already incurred censure enough for the appointment of such a man to such an office, and offering to attend himself in his place. The Regent gave him a solemn promise to comply with his entreaty, but broke his promise at the entreaty of one of his mistresses, who sought to make his attendance a means of reconciling herself to Dubois, who had quarrelled with her, and of whose malice she stood in constant fear.

Dubois undoubtedly valued his archbishopric greatly for its emoluments, but still more as a stepping-stone to a seat in the Sacred College, of which he now felt

* Gibbon, c. 27.

assured. To secure it he employed every variety of means. He prevailed on both George I. and the Pretender to interest themselves in his favour; he had induced one Pope, Clement XI., to promise him the desired promotion, by undertaking in return to procure the acceptance of the Bull *Unigenitus* by the French Church; when Clement died, he won over his successor, Innocent XIII., formerly known as the Cardinal Conti, by exerting the influence of France to procure his nomination; and he likewise distributed such numerous and lavish bribes among the different cardinals, the Pope's secretaries, and even to the Pope's mistress, that some estimates have carried them to the enormous sum of eight millions of francs. He did not think it too high a price; especially as it came out of the treasury of the kingdom, and not out of his own coffers. His own statement to his agent at Rome was, that if more money were wanted, "he would sell himself if any one would buy him even to make a galley-slave." In one respect he found he had met with a bargainer as crafty and unscrupulous as himself; for the first appointment made by Innocent was that of his own brother; and Dubois had to begin bribing over again. However, his perseverance succeeded at last, and in the summer of 1721, he received the long-coveted scarlet hat, conferred on him, as he was in the habit of boasting, with the unanimous approbation of all the Sovereigns of Christendom.*

At the beginning of the next year he was appointed a member of the Council of Regency; not without violent opposition on the part of the existing mem-

* "Il ne put s'empêcher de débiter à tout le monde que ce qui l'honorait plus que la pourpre romaine était le vœu unanime et l'empressement de toutes les puissances à la lui procurer."—St. Simon, xviii. 386.

bers, some of whom threw up their seats; though perhaps his claim of precedence over them as a prince of the church had the chief share in rousing their indignation. One, the Duke de Noailles, who avowed to himself that his objections were to his character, he induced the Regent to banish; and the same sentence was signed against D'Aguesseau, who was deprived of the seals, which were transferred to M. d'Armenonville, who for the last three years had been a Secretary of State.

His power was now universal and absolute. The Regent submitted to his dictation on every point. The nobles found opposition almost as ruinous as in the days of Richelieu. Dubois was able even to procure the arrest and banishment of Villeroi, though the king had become personally attached to him, and even cried when he heard of his disgrace; but in this instance the Regent's inclination coincided with and outran his own. Villeroi, who was as vain and arrogant as he was empty-headed, had not only abused Dubois to his face, but had insulted the Regent far more intolerably by the ostentatious care with which he kept under lock and key the king's bread and butter and pocket-handkerchiefs; as if, says St. Simon, there was an intention of poisoning him, and as if those who cherished such a purpose could not have made other articles of his food and clothing vehicles for poison.* It was perhaps even a greater proof of the new cardinal's all-engrossing influence that some of the *roués* succumbed to it, and Nocé and Canillac were honoured with a sentence similar to that of D'Aguesseau and Noailles. He determined to carry the resemblance to the great cardinal still further. Richelieu had been formally ap-

* St. Simon, 235.

pointed prime minister. He resolved that the Regent should confer the same title on him ; and in the summer of 1722 he carried this point also. Though still only entering on middle age, the Regent's excesses had worn him out. He complained to St. Simon (the one respectable friend who adhered to him, and his steady regard for whom leading him even to a patient endurance of his unsparing rebukes, is the one redeeming point in his character) that love and wine had lost their charms for him ; and if these had begun to weary him, business, which he had always hated and shunned as far as possible, wearied him more. He told the duke that it kept him at Versailles when he would rather be at Paris supping with his *roués* or at the opera ; and that he had therefore determined to transfer the burden of state affairs from himself to a prime minister.* The duke found in this announcement cause for the most vigorous remonstrance which he had ever addressed to his royal friend. He did not spare even the suppers, which were the chief part of his excuse ; telling him that they were barely excusable for youths of eighteen or twenty, but intolerable in grown-up men. Still less did he show mercy to the character of the intended prime minister ; and for a time he thought he had succeeded. He did make so much impression, that a day or two afterwards the Regent complained to him of the cardinal's ambition

* Lacretelle appears to doubt that these were really the Regent's motives, and attributes his appointment of Dubois to a deliberate wish to retain the chief influence in the Government after the king should have attained his majority. There was no precedent for the first prince of the blood being himself prime minister. But Dubois would be at all times so dependent on him for support against his numerous enemies, that if he had the title, he himself would retain the power." (I. 368-9.) It seems to me that this idea attributes a degree of foresight and deliberation to the Regent which was quite foreign to his nature.

and rapacity as being both equally insatiable, declaring that he would not be more satisfied if made prime minister than he was then. And St. Simon tried to confirm his feeling by insinuating that Dubois only wanted to make his favour a stepping-stone to still higher fortune. At last he drew up a long memorial against the proposed promotion, basing his arguments on the misfortunes of every king who had ever had a cardinal for his prime minister, from Louis XI. and Balue, from Louis XII. and Amboise, from Henry of England and Wolsey, from the influence of the Cardinal Lorraine, and of Mazarin; excepting only two from the list of ecclesiastics whose power had been injurious to their master or their country, Ximenes and Richelieu. He read it with emphasis; the Regent listened, or seemed to listen, with his elbows on the table, and his face covered by his hands, and ended the interview by declaring that all he had now to do was to complete the appointment; and he completed it.*

The real influence of Dubois had before this time produced great effects. The brief period of his nominal authority was barren of important events, and was only marked by the king's attainment of his legal majority, and his consequent coronation. Louis XV. had been a delicate child, and even in the course of the last year had been attacked by more than one dangerous illness. The people in general, always ready to believe the worst, and seldom having such good excuse for doing so as was afforded by the flagitious character of the Regent and his chosen agents and companions, suspected that an attempt had been made to poison him. But the suspicion was groundless; and,

* St. Simon, xx. 277-300.

in fact, almost the only thing that can be said to the Regent's credit during his whole administration is that to the best of his judgment he watched over the welfare and interest of his young cousin and king with the most faithful loyalty. Louis XV. had been born on the 10th February, 1710, and in February, 1723, he therefore attained his legal majority, and held a Bed of Justice to make a formal announcement of the fact to the Parliament. He had been provided with a wife above a year before; and if in one respect the arrangement of Dubois was calculated to be popular with the nation, as being a return to the policy of Louis XIV., in another it was open to great objections, as keeping the succession for a long time uncertain. The brief war with Spain had been followed by more than one treaty, which bound France to espouse the interests of Spain for the future; and, in the summer of 1721, he proposed to the Spanish ministers to re-establish the alliance indissolubly by the marriage of the young king to the Infanta, and of Philip's heir, the Prince of Asturias, to the Regent's daughter, a new Mademoiselle de Montpensier. The latter pair, though too young for the immediate completion of the ceremony, were well matched in age; the prince being fourteen, and the princess twelve. But the more important match was of a different character; for while Louis XV. was twelve, his destined bride was hardly three; while, therefore, if the arrangement were carried out, many years must elapse before it could be seasonable, it was equally obvious that such an interval presented many chances of its being broken off, and as many that its rupture would be the cause of a revival of ill feeling, and perhaps of a renewal of hostilities between the two nations. In fact, as we shall see hereafter, it was broken off, and the Spaniards resented

such treatment of their princess so warmly as to renounce the friendship of France altogether, and to form a close alliance with the power which French statesmen in general had long considered its most irreconcilable foe, the House of Austria.

The young king had for some time been introduced by the Duke d'Orleans to the sittings of the Council of Regency, so that the forms of business were not strange to him ; but he showed no inclination at any time of his life to undertake the labour of government, or to comprehend its duties. Still less, if possible, had he as yet given evidences of any disposition towards the vices which have made his name a bye-word even among the most dissolute of sovereigns. His tastes and amusements had hitherto been simple, innocent, and even homely. He liked gardening ; he was fond of pets selected from the dairy or the sheepfold ; he looked up to his preceptor, Fleury, still Bishop of Fréjus, with a childish attachment ; and his only propensity which seemed to require checking was one which he inherited from too many of his ancestors, an inclination for high play. At his coming of age, the Council of Regency naturally expired, and a Council of State was substituted for it, consisting of the Duke d'Orleans, his son the Duke de Chartres, the Duke de Bourbon, Dubois, and the foreign secretary, M. de Morville. But before it could do a single act of importance, or lay down even the foundation of a policy, its whole constitution was changed by the death of its principal member. Dubois was getting an old man, and had long been afflicted with an internal complaint, which in the course of the summer of 1723 became so aggravated by his attempts to conceal it, that the surgeons insisted on an operation, which proved fatal in a few hours. The last moments of the cardinal

were characteristic, but not edifying. He abused the surgeons who recommended the operation. He ridiculed those who besought him to receive the sacraments of the church, and died reviling doctors and priests with equal vehemence. The conduct of the Regent was equally characteristic of him. He did, indeed, pay a visit to the dying man, and advised him to submit to the required operation ; but it was apparently only in order to be sure that he really was dying. Even the courtiers were disgusted, when a high wind rose in the evening, at hearing him express a hope that there would be " storm enough to carry off his buffoon."* And the moment that he was dead, he wrote letters of recall to those whom Dubois had made him banish, inviting them to return with all speed, as there was no more danger—" The viper was dead, and his venom was now harmless."† Yet he was in reality a great loss to D'Orleans. He had not only great shrewdness and judgment in the foreign policy of the kingdom, but he had also a force of will and energy of character of which his patron was wholly destitute, and in the discharge of his ministerial duties great industry and method. Nothing, apparently, but the infamy of his personal character prevented him from being a great minister ; and the prince whom he served was the last man in the kingdom entitled to throw that reproach in his teeth.‡

* "Voilà un temps qui, j'espère, emportera mon drôle."—Lacretelle, ii. 374.

† "Morta la bestia, morto il veneno."—Ib., 377.

‡ After his death it was alleged that Dubois had been in the pay of the English ministry, who bribed him with the enormous pension of a million a year, equal to 40,000*l.* of our money. And the statement is adopted by more than one of the best French historians, such as Lacretelle and Sismondi ; the last even adding that after his death the pension was continued to Madame Prie. But Sevelinges (i. 16) denies the statement, and treats it as an absurd invention of the cardinal's enemies. Lord Mahon says—"It was through Dubois that England for fourteen years drew France into a close

He was not long in following him. Dubois had died on the 10th of August; the Duke was attacked by apoplexy in less than four months afterwards. On the death of the minister the king had insisted on his taking his office on himself.* Though he had been very unwilling to consent, yet, having undertaken it, he had applied himself with increased steadiness to affairs of state; and although in the mornings he seemed so oppressed and almost stupefied, that St. Simon was convinced that he had not long to live, in the afternoons his intellect seemed as clear as ever: he was as earnest for new schemes, and as full of new hopes as in his earlier days. At the same time his nights were spent in riot and debauchery with as much eagerness as when they had afforded him the pleasure which he had now ceased to derive from them. He had lately become enamoured of a new mistress, the Duchess de Phalaris, a woman of low birth, whose husband had been ennobled by the Pope, and who stimulated him to the indulgence of all his worst excesses. The doctors warned him repeatedly that he could not continue to practise them with impunity; but when they added that they would bring on an attack of apoplexy, they failed to alarm him. Such a death, he declared, was that which he should prefer. He did, however, promise to submit to a regimen of spare

concert of measures: in return, the abbé, it has been said, but never shown, received a yearly pension from the English government."—c. xiii. vol. ii. 84. The amount of the pension alleged seems sufficient to refute the statement, though it is not impossible that he may on some occasions have received a bribe which was magnified into a yearly allowance.—According to Lord Mahon, Madame Prie was under the influence of Bolingbroke rather than of Walpole.—Lacretelle tells us, in another place, that the same imputation was cast on the Spanish minister Grimaldi. And every country supplies instances of the recklessness with which such charges were made, without a shadow of foundation.

* St. Simon, xx. 408.

living for a day or two, to prepare for being copiously bled ; but on the very day on which he had agreed to begin it, the blow fell on him. On the afternoon of the 2nd December he went to pay the duchess a visit, and had hardly entered the house, when he fell down in a fit. Before assistance could arrive he was dead. He was in his fortieth year, and had governed the kingdom with all the power of a sovereign for eight years and a quarter.

With all his vices, and, with the exception of cruelty, it would be hard to name one by which he was not disfigured, his regency was not, on the whole, disastrous to the kingdom. Even his patronage of Law's schemes, though fraught with abundant ruin to individuals, and, in the means taken to meet the crash which ensued, most damaging to the public credit, contributed to lessen the debt which at the death of the late king had pressed overwhelmingly on the nation ; and his maintenance of peace, to which the brief quarrel with Spain hardly deserves to be called an interruption, greatly recruited the national resources of every kind. It is true that his motives for the avoidance of war were not so creditable as his conduct was beneficial, being principally to obtain leisure and funds for the undisturbed and unlimited indulgence of his debaucheries. And the policy by which, he secured his object, the alliance with England, was, as we have seen, suggested to him by Dubois, who was the first to perceive its importance as the strongest guarantee of general tranquillity. But, though the credit of that measure may belong to his minister, there is no doubt that he himself was possessed of great general ability, and was well qualified by his capacity to shine as a statesman, as he had in early youth given proof of some considerable qualifications for military command.

Impossible as his best, we may say, perhaps, his only friend, found it to respect him, it is remarkable that, except at the moment of the failure of the Mississippi scheme, he was never unpopular. Even historians of a later and more decorous generation deal lightly with his memory; touching his faults with a tender hand, and preferring to dwell on his cleverness, his wit, his courtesy, and his early distinction in the field; so that Lacretelle* even ventures, in his summary of his character, to recall the memory of the especial and most permanent favourite of the nation, Henry IV., and to affirm that, in those points, none of that monarch's descendants so closely resembled him. We should rather compare him to his cousin, Charles II. of England; and even then we should be forced to add that he reproduced all Charles's failings with great and certainly superfluous exaggeration. He was more faithless and selfish; more dissolute and shameless in his licence. In one respect he was more fortunate than his English prototype; that, while Charles not only sacrificed the honour of his kingdom by his subservience to France, but proposed to use her assistance to destroy the liberties of his people, and with their liberties, their prosperity; he, on the other hand, by establishing an alliance between the two countries on equal terms so soon after the humiliation to which Louis XIV. had been reduced to submit, improved the internal condition of his own, and greatly raised her reputation among foreign nations.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THOUGH the deceased duke was both the first prince of the blood and the prime minister, and though his death was sudden, as we have seen, it yet caused no confusion or perplexity for even a single day. His only son was scarcely twenty years of age, and could not, therefore, succeed to any portion of his authority. But, as the vacancy had been foreseen, it had been provided for. St. Simon had taken counsel with Fleury, whose influence over the young king exceeded that of any other person, suggesting that he should prepare to fill the duke's place ; but the gentle bishop, fearful of drawing envy and ill-will upon himself, rejected the proposal ; and insisting that, at all events, till the king should have really arrived at manhood, a prince of the blood could alone discharge the duties of the office with sufficient authority,* declared that the Duke de Bourbon was the only possible successor. St. Simon had the worst possible opinion of Bourbon. In his eyes Bourbon's morals were but little better than those of D'Orleans, while his abilities and temper were infinitely worse. But, as he found it useless to urge such arguments on Fleury, who adhered to his own view, he was forced to acquiesce. The moment that D'Orleans died, a portion of the council assembled in the king's closet, and in a few minutes

* St. Simon, *xx.* 420-2.

the whole affair was settled. Fleury recommended the king to entrust the administration to Bourbon ; the king nodded assent, and as La Vrillière, one of the secretaries of state, knowing from Fleury what was likely to happen, had brought with him a copy of the oath taken by the prime minister, the duke was sworn in on the spot. The news soon spread ; and before night, he who had before been one of the most unpopular men in the kingdom, had all the Court and all Paris at his feet.*

It could not be said that much had been gained by the change. Bourbon had, indeed, but one mistress, the Marchioness de Prie ; but he was her slave to an extent that the Regent had never been to any woman. She was as much given to political intrigues as to those of any other kind, and for some years she in fact ruled the kingdom ; selling her influence almost openly to any foreign king or minister who thought her worth purchasing.

The policy adopted was worthy of its source. It is singular how commonly it has happened that those most indifferent to religion themselves have been the most violent in their interference with the religion of others ; and the marchioness, who in her daily conduct set an example of dissoluteness which few even of the other sex equalled, and who added to her profligacy an open profession of atheism, began her career as a politician by persuading Bourbon to renew the persecution of the remnant of Huguenots, who in their mountain fastnesses, amid difficulty and danger and hardship, still clung with simple but inflexible courage to their gloomy homes and their

* " Et dans un moment il ne fut plus parlé que de M. le Duc."—St. Simon, 463.

rigorous Calvinistic faith. The conduct of the persecution was characteristically entrusted to Bishop Tressan, the one member of his order, it may be recollected, whom Dubois had judged suitable to make him a priest. Being eager to gain the favour of the Romish court, he had endeavoured to persuade Dubois and the Regent to reward his compliance by allowing him to take what measures he pleased with the heretics. On that point, however, he found them quite impracticable, and was dismissed with a severe rebuff. But now he had no difficulty in obtaining the ear of Madame de Prie; and, at her dictation, Bourbon re-enacted a compilation of all the most rigorous edicts which Louis XIV. had ever promulgated; and the officers who were entrusted with the execution were given to understand that those would be most esteemed and best rewarded whose ingenuity should contrive to aggravate the severities of the written law. Every Huguenot minister was now declared deserving of death. Of their congregations, the men were to be sent to the galleys, the women were to be condemned to perpetual banishment; their marriages, unless performed by a Catholic priest, were to be held void; their children were incapacitated from inheriting property. Private worship was forbidden with equal strictness; and any compassionate Catholics who might shelter a heretic, or even forbear to denounce one, were to be liable to the same punishments. An especial injunction was laid on physicians to inform against their heretical patients, that, if the approach of death seemed likely to exempt them from the infliction of bodily punishment, a Catholic priest might be sent to compel them to receive the sacrament according to the rites of his church; and additional penalties were denounced against

those who, however near might be their relationship, ventured to utter a Huguenot prayer by the bedside of a dying kinsman. In some districts, among the lower orders of the Catholic clergy, the new law was received with eagerness. They rivalled one another in exceeding its fury, seeking to force those who fell into their power, and especially maidens who sought to be married by them, to curse their dead relations, and to swear that they believed in their eternal damnation.* The Huguenots fled in horror from such barbarity; and once more crowds of honest and industrious citizens emigrated to other countries, which gladly welcomed them to their shores. But the Parliament, led in this instance by D'Aguesseau and the Procureur-General, protested vehemently against these new edicts as a whole, and particularly against this mode of carrying them out; and in some provinces the tribunals absolutely refused to put them in force. When Bourbon fell into disgrace, the further execution of them was suspended altogether; though, as they were not formally repealed, they were occasionally revived when some extraordinary profligacy or impiety of the rulers of the State seemed to require some extraordinary purification.

Another measure of internal policy awakened more general dissatisfaction; the marchioness took under her protection the ablest of the brothers Pâris, as they were generally called, M. Duverney, and committed to him the chief management of the finances. He would have made an excellent subordinate, for he was clever and industrious; but no one could be more unfit to be the chief of such a department, for he was prone to adopt the wildest theories, and utterly indifferent to

* Lemontey, ii. 16, quoted by Sismondi.

the maintenance of public faith. He thought it possible to regulate the value of paper money, and of corn, and of every article of trade ; and with these notions, by a succession of ordinances, after a series of interferences with the currency which left it almost impossible for any one to know of what he was possessed, he issued a tariff fixing the price at which everything should be sold. When traders shut up their shops, and workmen refused to labour for the wages with which he decided that they were to be content, he sent troops to enforce obedience to his edicts ; violence begat violence ; the populace rose against the soldiers, and fierce riots, only to be extinguished by much bloodshed, as long as Bourbon's administration lasted, raged at intervals in the most flourishing towns of the kingdom. Other ordinances imposed new taxes. With all his faults, Dubois had managed the public revenue with skill and economy, and the Regent's own income had sufficed for all his personal expenditure ; but Bourbon had a taste for sumptuous extravagance of every kind, which his own possessions, vast as they were, could not support ; and, as he made no scruple of drawing on the national exchequer, Duverney could only put it in a condition to meet his demands by fresh imposts. One edict levied 2 per cent. on every kind of produce or income, which, in the case of the fruits of the earth, was to be taken in kind. Another, reviving the old feudal tax known as that of "the happy accession,"* attached a heavy stamp duty to every patent of appointment, to every licence to trade, to every deed of any kind whatever which had to pass the royal seal ; and the taxes were fixed at a higher rate, from the necessity of farming them out for immediate payment.

* Impôt de joyeux avènement.

One of Bourbon's measures was not so much oppressive as ludicrous. Some culler of statistics had alleged that the population of Paris amounted to 1,400,000 souls, a most preposterous exaggeration, probably more than doubling the truth; and the duke adopted the idea that by an edict he could prevent people from flocking from the provinces to the metropolis, and the city from holding them if they came. With this view an edict was issued in May, 1724, forbidding the enlargement of either city or suburbs in any direction. No one was to build any more large houses, nor to carry any street beyond the last house at present standing in it; nor to make any new streets. It was not indeed oppressive, because its absurdity rendered it inoperative: but it made the whole Government ridiculous and contemptible, which perhaps in most countries, and certainly in France, is more dangerous than even rendering it odious; and probably no measure more contributed to the duke's fall, and to the joy with which his disgrace was greeted.

The foreign policy, in its most important part, was Bourbon's own, being influenced chiefly by his hatred of the young Duke d'Orleans, who, in the event of the king's death, was the next heir to the throne. To prevent the possibility of his accession, Bourbon's first idea was to make use of the King of Spain, by persuading him to disregard the renunciations of his rights. Philip, without waiting for any suggestion from him, was sufficiently inclined to do so; and, with a view to giving such a renunciation justification and validity, resolved to abdicate the Spanish crown. Accordingly, in January, 1724, by a formal deed he transferred it to his son. But in the summer of the same year the new king died of the small-pox, and Philip, though

not without many scruples, resumed his authority. Meanwhile the health of the young Louis got stronger. He had taken a violent fancy to field sports, in which Bourbon encouraged, and, by the abundance of game in his own magnificent park and forest at Chantilly, was able to gratify him; and they had had an excellent effect on his constitution. He grew rapidly, and, as to his original beauty of feature, great vigour of body began to be added, the duke saw a still surer method of extinguishing the prospects of D'Orleans by marrying him to a wife who might bear heirs to the crown, if the engagement to the Infanta, who was being educated in France with the view of becoming its queen, and was as yet but six years old, had not stood in the way of such a design. He began to think of dissolving the engagement; and while he was hesitating, a sudden illness of the king, which, though short, was attended with extreme danger, decided him. He at once proposed the dismissal of the Infanta to the Council of State, who unanimously agreed in its expediency. "She should be sent back to Spain," said the foreign secretary, the Count de Morville, "in a coach, if that would be the quickest way of getting rid of her." And the royal minister and his mistress at once set about looking out for a more suitable match. Bourbon himself would have desired the promotion for his own sister, Mademoiselle de Vermandois, who was exceedingly beautiful and nearly twenty years of age. But Madame de Prie determined to see how far she would suit her views also. The princess had been brought up very religiously in a convent, in such strict seclusion that she had never seen the mistress who, under a feigned name, paid her a visit. She found that though Mademoiselle de Vermandois did not know her person,

she was well acquainted with her reputation, and held her in abhorrence. "You at least," she said, taking leave of her, "shall never be queen." And the duke was compelled to seek for some one else who might be less well informed on court politics, or less scrupulous, or, at all events, less free spoken.

He thought of an English princess ; but the English ministers would not hear of a daughter of their king changing her religion. The Empress Catherine I. of Russia offered her daughter, and undertook that she should become a Catholic ; but Russia had not yet become powerful enough for its alliance to be looked on as an object of importance ; and the marchioness preferred one who, having no external circumstances to recommend her, should owe her advancement solely to her, and would thus be laid under obligations to her in which she might find her account. Such a princess was Marie Leczinska, daughter of Stanislaus, King of Poland, who a few years before had been deprived of his throne in a revolution which ensued upon the death of Charles XII. of Sweden, who had placed him on it. Her attractions were those of disposition and manners rather than of feature ; and the Duke d'Antin, who was sent on an embassy to her father, to whom the late Regent had given an asylum in Alsace, wrote in high praise of her general powers of fascination. The marriage took place in September, 1725, when the king was fifteen years and a half old. And for some time it appeared full of promise for both him and the nation. He soon became exceedingly attached to her, seeing charms even in her person which others had failed to perceive, and in his honest affection not concealing that she was in his eyes the standard of perfection. "Is she as handsome as the queen?" was his question when any other lady was

extolled before him for her beauty ; and, as no one ventured to reply in the affirmative, the constant repetition of her praises gradually created an opinion of their correctness ; and it had begun to be a fashion among the courtiers to admire her, when the wicked influence of two or three profligate nobles, more abandoned in this respect than the Regent himself, broke up their sovereign's domestic happiness and respectability, and changed the whole character of what might otherwise have been a happy, honourable, and beneficent reign.

Philip of Spain and his queen, a woman of high and even fierce spirit, were, as might have been expected, furious at the slight thus cast upon their daughter ; and the whole people fully shared their feelings. The Abbé de Livry was the bearer of the letter announcing the intended return of the Infanta. The king refused to open it. The queen, in full court, tore from her arm a bracelet containing a portrait of the young Louis, and trampled it under her feet ; and sending for the English ambassador, Mr. W. Stanhope, they both appealed to him to witness how they and their family were treated ; and, declaring that such an insult could only be washed out by rivers of blood, claimed the aid of his sovereign as the only prince on whom they could rely. Mademoiselle Beaujolais, the daughter of the Regent d'Orleans, who had come to Spain to be married to the Infante Don Carlos, though her sister was already their daughter-in-law, and the widow of the late king, was sent back in retaliation, with studied discourtesy. All French officers of every kind were ordered to leave the country, and the populace of Madrid insulted them in the streets. Bourbon, though he had been prepared for an outbreak of rage, was alarmed at the violence of the explosion, and despatched

his brother, the Count de Charolais, to pacify Philip. But the king refused to accept any apology which was not offered by Bourbon in person on his knees; and, being conscious of the inability of his nation single-handed to cope with France, occupied himself in seeking for allies. He soon found that his injuries would not induce the British Government to break off its connexion with France. And, as the only power able to assist him was the Empire, he sacrificed his old enmity against Charles to his fresher quarrel, and despatched an ambassador to Vienna to form an alliance with him, as one who had been at all times treated as an enemy by France. He succeeded in his wish. Within six weeks of the return of the Infanta, a treaty was concluded between Spain and the emperor, in which each sacrificed many of the objects for which he had before contended. Charles acknowledged Philip as King of Spain; Philip gave up all claim to the old possessions of the Spanish crown in the Low Countries and in Italy; and, moreover, guaranteed the arrangement known as the Pragmatic Sanction, by which, in default of male heirs, the inheritance of the emperor's vast dominions was secured to his eldest daughter.

The negotiator whom Philip had employed was one whose character and career were among the most remarkable of his time. He was a Baron Ripperda, by descent a Spaniard, by birth a Dutchman. In the War of the Succession, of which his country was one of the chief scenes, he gained some reputation as a soldier; and after its termination he paid his first visit to Spain as the minister of the republic. Preferring the climate, and still more the manners of Spain to those of his native land, he resolved to enter into the king's service, and with that view exchanged

his Calvinism for adherence to the Romish religion. He courted and imitated Alberoni, who conceived a high opinion of his capacity, and employed him in the execution of many of his most cherished measures; and he gained the ear of the king and queen likewise, who, regretting the cardinal after they had parted with him, gave Ripperda a great share of the confidence which they had formerly reposed in that minister. As the Marquis Grimaldi had succeeded Alberoni in his office, Ripperda's first object was to undermine that nobleman in the royal favour, a task which Philip's weak and suspicious disposition made particularly easy. And when he returned from Vienna, elated with, and doubly welcome on account of his success, he had but little trouble in procuring Grimaldi's dismissal, and the appointment to succeed him. But his power was short-lived. The causes of his disgrace are variously explained. According to the majority of French writers, he was found to have been bribed by both Austria and England. But the latter circumstance is certainly untrue; for Mr. W. Stanhope, while recognising his ability, had formed so low an estimate of his steadiness and trustworthiness that he did not think him worth buying. And the more probable account is, that both his own master and the emperor found that he had deceived them, exaggerating to his master Charles's readiness to plunge into war, and to Charles the resources by which Spain could maintain a war; and also that the unrestrained familiarity with which he talked in all companies of the late treaty and its objects, was calculated to defeat them, even had both countries been far more powerful than they were.* In little

* "History of England," by Lord Mahon, c. 14.

more than six months he was deprived of his office, and thrown into prison. He escaped from his dungeon and from the country; and the latter part of his career was even stranger than its beginning. At first he fled to England, and lived in London in considerable splendour for some time, being frequently admitted to interviews with the ministers; and, (so great was his power of self-delusion,) cherishing hopes of becoming a member of the British Government. When he found his mistake he returned to Holland, abjured the doctrines of the pope, and again became a Calvinist: but finding that, in that sober land, he obtained less credit by his reconversion than he had lost by his apostasy, he quitted it for Morocco, professed Islamism, entered the service of the Emperor Muley Abdallah, and as a Moorish pacha obtained an influence in the councils and a chief command in the armies of his new country. He even defeated his old comrades the Spaniards in more than one battle; but, being worsted in an action near Ceuta, he was a second time deprived of his authority; and, seeking an asylum at Tetuan, he spent the last year or two of his adventurous life in that city, dying there at the age of seventy-two, twelve years after the time of which we are speaking.

But the hollowness of Ripperda's projects and the emptiness of his boasts were not seen through at first. Bourbon, alarmed at the alliance between the empire and Spain, which, though the contracting parties endeavoured to keep the treaty secret, was pretty generally known, and which was evidently directed chiefly against his country, sent the Duke de Richelieu to Vienna, to learn what were the real designs of the imperial government, and, if possible, to frustrate them. Beyond spending vast sums in

bribing every one who would take his money, whether they had any information to afford in return for it or not, Richelieu did nothing ; nor, indeed, did either his experience or abilities warrant the expectation that he would do anything. But the English ministers had acquired the most precise intelligence respecting the treaty, which they communicated to the French Government ; and when, at the end of the summer, King George crossed the Channel to visit his German dominions, he signed with the French minister a treaty of defensive alliance, to which Prussia also acceded ; by one of the clauses of which France finally bound herself to discountenance every enterprise which might be undertaken in favour of the Pretender to the English throne. But, as the treaty of Vienna was followed by no practical results, that of Hanover, designed to counteract it, was necessarily equally barren. And for several years home politics alone offer any object to arrest the attention.

The apprehension of impending war, however, had led to the only act of Bourbon as a minister, in which any traces of statesmanlike foresight or resolution are discernible. Hitherto the army, which when placed on a permanent peace establishment amounted to between 120,000 and 150,000 men, had no certain sources from which it could be recruited, but trusted to voluntary enlistment to supply its yearly vacancies. But, as that resource, though sufficient during peace, was apt to fail in time of war, Duverney now suggested to the duke the enrolment of a militia of 60,000 men, whose period of service in each year should not be such as to interfere with their ordinary avocations of agricultural labour or trade ; and yet should qualify them, in the emergencies of war, to fill up the ranks of the regular army as trained

soldiers. Such a force had been long established on the other side of the Channel, where it was far more popular than the regular army. And, except that the English militia could not, by its constitution, be called on to serve out of the kingdom, the regulations which Duverney proposed resembled those in force in England. But military service was so acceptable to all ranks in France, that the difference awakened no discontent; and there seems to have been a general approval of a measure which provided an admirable nursery and training-school for the army, without unduly interfering with the more peaceful engagements of the citizens.

But generally the ministry was becoming very unpopular. Many even of the members of the Council had opposed the new taxes; and, though the Parliament did not venture to refuse to register the necessary edicts, yet M. Gilbert, the advocate-general, even while laying them before it, avowed his deep conviction of their impolicy and injustice. The discontent was diffused more widely, by a scarcity which in 1725 affected the greater part of the kingdom. In some provinces bread rose to fivepence a pound. The Government met the crisis with absolute inactivity; while the populace, always sufficiently inclined to impute its sufferings to maladministration, had a more than usual excuse given them by the arrogant impiety of the mistress. When, at the height of the bad weather, the priests were bearing the relics of St. Geneviève in solemn procession through the streets to implore her intercession, she derided the worshippers, saying loudly, that she herself was the divinity on whom the weather depended;* and the

* "Le peuple est fou. C'est moi qui fais la pluie et le beau temps."—Lacretelle, ii. 5 (note).

more ignorant of the mob took her at her word, and railed bitterly and dangerously at her as the cause of their misery, which she refused to alleviate.

With his naturally fierce disposition exasperated by their murmurs Bourbon resolved to avenge himself upon Fleury, of whom he was the more jealous, because he was conscious that it was to him that he owed his position as prime minister, and whom he suspected of now secretly fomenting the irritation against him. As, however, he had no ground for openly attacking him, he tried to make Louis's fondness for his queen the engine for getting rid of him. All his conferences with the king had hitherto always been held in the presence of Fleury, who was, indeed, the only person who was able to fix his majesty's attention to business, or to overcome his inflexible taciturnity. But now Bourbon and Madame de Prie, whom Marie Leczinska had been compelled to receive as her chief lady of honour, by dwelling on the bishop's paramount authority, and working on a young wife's natural unwillingness to admit any influence superior to her own, easily persuaded her to suggest to her husband that he would find it more comfortable to transact such affairs as it was necessary to submit to him in her private room, as Louis XIV. had in his latter years made his wife's saloon his council-chamber. The uxorious monarch caught gladly at the proposal. The next evening the duke brought him a bundle of papers to Marie's private apartment, and when Fleury came to attend him in the room usually set apart for the transaction of business, he found it empty.* After waiting there for some time in vain, he divined the cause of this departure of the king from his ordinary

* Voltaire, "*Siècle de Louis XV.*," c. 3, represents Fleury as following the king to the queen's apartment, and being refused admittance.

habits, and saw that an attempt was being made to alienate Louis from him. The conspirators had no suspicion of the strength of the king's attachment to his old tutor. The virtues and graces by which the bishop had riveted it, patience, moderation, disinterestedness, gentleness, kindness of heart, as well as of manner, were exactly the qualities which they were least qualified to appreciate : but Fleury himself knew his power. He felt that he had made himself indispensable to his pupil, and in that consciousness he took no further notice of the slight which he had received, beyond retiring to Issy, a village five or six miles from Paris, like a man in disgrace. Voltaire, in sketching the circumstances of his retirement and return, is irresistibly reminded of the "Day of Dupes," when a century before, the plotters who sought to break the power of Richelieu were crushed beneath his influence. Fleury had left in the hands of a trusty friend, the Duke de Mortemar, the noble in waiting on the king, a letter, in which he took a respectful leave of his majesty, as being unequal to the contest with those who were trying to deprive him of his royal favour, and having also now attained an age when it became him to dedicate his few remaining years to the service of God. He mentioned the convent to which he was about to retire ; because (he would have said himself) it would have been disrespectful to have withheld the information ; because (those who doubt the sincerity of his humility, and give him more credit for politic wiles and craftiness, would have affirmed,) he would not have the king's desire to recall him, which he confidently foresaw, prevented by any difficulty in finding him. He had not miscalculated the effect of his letter, and of his withdrawal. Louis, according to his wont, said nothing. Though a married man, he was

still a mere child in timidity and helplessness of mind. But after a time, as he gradually realized the fact that he was to see his old friend and adviser no more, he began to weep and sob in helpless despair. Mortemar saw his opportunity, and consoled his youthful sovereign with the admonition that he need not weep, since it rested with but himself to recall Fleury, and since no one dared to gainsay him. The king caught eagerly at the suggestion: Mortemar volunteered to convey his mandate to the Duke de Bourbon, to send to Issy, and implore the bishop to return. He returned. Few events ever caused greater excitement in the court or city. Almost every one rejoiced that Fleury was recalled; while the courtiers, who hated the duke, compared him to Haman, when compelled to pay unexpected honours to his enemy sitting at the king's gate; and augured ill of the duration of his power from the comparison. But for the attempt which had been made to get rid of the bishop the queen was generally more blamed than he. It happened that that evening the actors performed Racine's 'Britannicus' before the court, and when Narcissus repeated the line—

"Que tardez-vous, seigneur, à la répudier?"

(Why not at once divorce her, good my lord?)

the audience turned their eyes on the queen, as if by their inquisitive glances asking whether she did not feel that the suggestion of the poet might possibly find an echo in the mind of her husband.*

The anticipations of Bourbon's disgrace were soon fulfilled. When Fleury had rejected the suggestion of St. Simon to make himself prime minister, he founded his argument chiefly on the extreme youth

* "Siècle de Louis XV.," c. 3. Voltaire was present in the theatre, and records the occurrence as an eye-witness.

of the king, who had but just completed his thirteenth year. And, though the few years which had since elapsed had done little to mature his intellect, the fact of his marriage and of his being about to become a father, made a great difference in the light in which he was regarded by the nation. The bishop, therefore, probably thought that he could now accept the chief power without drawing on himself any ill-will or envy, which he always deprecated. He was aware, too, that the existing Government was far more unpopular with all classes than that which had preceded it. In truth, the discontent and resistance which the new taxes had provoked were becoming so universal as seriously to threaten the tranquillity of the kingdom. The provinces were still suffering severely from a scarcity of grain, and in many of them the parliaments had positively refused to register the financial edicts, while bands of armed desperadoes traversed them with impunity, threatening with fire and slaughter the revenue officers, and all who should pay them money. At the same time the capital was visited by epidemics of unusual violence, which in the spring of 1726 carried off thousands of the citizens. The laws were powerless; the Government seemed indifferent to the misery which surrounded it, and took no steps of precaution or remedy, whether to relieve want or to avert disease. Formidable riots took place, some of which were not quelled without loss of life. The chief outcry was directed against Duverney, as the financial minister, and against Madame de Prie, as being, by her boundless licentiousness and extravagance, one great, if not the principal, cause of the exhaustion of the treasury which had rendered the new taxes necessary. Fleury recommended Bourbon to dismiss them both: he could hardly have expected his

advice to be adopted, but the tender of it was one more attempt to disarm hostility. When Bourbon rejected it, he addressed the same counsels to the queen, begging her to use her influence against those who, as he represented the case, were endangering the popularity of the king himself. But Marie still felt the jealousy of himself with which Madame de Prie had inspired her, and was grateful to the mistress for her friendly warnings. Fleury had gone too far to stop. As his advice would inevitably reach the ears of those against whom it was directed, he had now made two irreconcilable enemies, and he must fall or they. He now addressed the king himself, and with him he was sure to succeed. To the timid disposition of Louis the morose harshness of Bourbon was particularly disagreeable; and when he found that the gentle bishop was willing to replace him, his joy was great; he was eager to emancipate himself, and to do what was required of him. Unhappily, the measures adopted were not calculated to give any one a high idea of either the king or the future minister. Fleury, however resolved on his course, did not look on it as unattended with danger. He was full of apprehension lest the duke, if he suspected what was intended, might make himself master of the king's person, and of the state; he therefore judged it necessary first to remove his majesty out of his reach, and, as he could not muster up courage to do even that in a straightforward manner, the young king got a lesson in duplicity, and was taught to imitate the treacherous conduct of Louis XIII. It was announced that the court was going to Rambouillet for change of air; and, on the 11th of June, the king, as he quitted the Louvre, bade Bourbon to be sure to arrive in time for supper. His manner was unusually cor-

dial. The prince gladly promised punctuality, and went to hasten the preparations for his own departure ; but the royal retinue had scarcely got beyond the gates of the city when the Duke de Charost brought him a brief letter, in which Louis commanded him, in the most curt and peremptory terms, on his allegiance, to retire to his estate at Chantilly, and wait there till he should receive fresh orders. Marie had not been allowed to accompany her husband, but a second letter had been left for her, enjoining her to obey the commands which the Bishop of Fréjus would communicate to her. Madame de Prie was banished to an estate belonging to her husband in Normandy ; and the circumstance that a loss of court favour should be distinguished by the name of banishment, which, indeed, had been long applied to it, painfully marks how utterly servile was the spirit of the whole nation, and how completely the duties of property were ignored by every class. If we are to seek in the profligacy and impiety of this and the last reign the primary cause of the terrible Revolution which at the end of the century overthrew the throne, we may perhaps no less find in the utter disregard of all their duties by the great territorial nobles and other landed proprietors the cause which rendered it so terrible, and which armed the peasantry with merciless enmity towards those to whom in other countries they look up as their best friends, but who in France were strangers to them. The great inventor of the odious taxes did not escape : Duverney was committed to the Bastille ; and thus ended a government which has sometimes been called the Second Regency.

It was hardly necessary that Fleury should receive a formal nomination as prime minister, so obvious was it that he had not only the chief but the sole

authority. But it was eminently characteristic of him that, with the wary caution with which he at all times sought to divert attention from himself, he declined the title; and, assuming no higher dignity than that of minister of state, made his royal pupil assert that for the future he intended to have no prime minister, but, like his predecessor, to govern his kingdom himself. We have seen how absurd such a phrase was in the mouth of him who first used it, or indeed as it would have been in that of any other sovereign: but it was infinitely more misplaced as an expression of the intention of the present king, who had neither aptitude nor inclination for business of any kind, and who, though on Fleury's death he repeated his declaration with greater emphasis, did in fact never direct or take part in the conduct of a single measure, but left everything to his ministers, till, as he advanced to middle age, he superseded them, to place the whole authority of the kingdom in the hands of the most infamous of mistresses.

Fleury was seventy-three years of age when he thus undertook the task of governing a great kingdom, whose affairs were in a state to give ample scope for the energies of a ruler in the prime of life; and even in his youth he could not have been called energetic; yet his want of vigour was perhaps the very quality which was most serviceable to his country at such a time. France wanted to be left to herself. She wanted peace abroad; she wanted economy at home: the first, that she might have leisure to develop her resources; the second, that she might secure the full benefit of their development. A love of peace and of economy were the two distinguishing features of the new minister's character; and, till he was overpowered by circumstances

which were beyond his control, of his administration. If it was strange to see so old a man undertake the government of the most important of European kingdoms for the first time, it was even stranger to see one in the possession of such unlimited power, so humble-minded and moderate; one with all the wealth of a great nation at his disposal, so simple and disinterested. And these virtues were the more calculated to gain the admiration of the French people from the marked contrast which they presented to the qualities of his clerical predecessors in authority. No one could call Richelieu humble; no one could remember Mazarin's hoards, and call him disinterested. Dubois, though not extravagant, had been as rapacious as he was profligate. But Fleury was, in the highest degree, unpretending in his exercise of power, and indifferent to riches. His integrity too was not only without stain, but above all suspicion;* and his manifest incorruptibility, when contrasted with the tales commonly reported and believed of the vast bribes exacted by Dubois and Madame de Prie from foreign powers, greatly tended to secure the willing acquiescence of all ranks in his authority, which far exceeded their submission to any former minister, to the wily Mazarin, or the imperious Richelieu.† The sole personal object which he ever appeared to covet was the rank of cardinal, which Bourbon, as long as he was minister, had secretly prevented him from receiving, but which, on the duke's disgrace, he obtained without difficulty.

* "Fleury était incapable non seulement d'accepter des présents et des pensions étrangères, mais hors de toute mesure qu'on osât lui en présenter," is the testimony of St. Simon (xvi. 400), who was generally not inclined to take a favourable view of Fleury's character.

† "Jamais roi de France, non pas même Louis XIV., n'a régné d'une manière si absolue, si sûre, si éloignée de toute contradiction."—St. Simon, xvi. 397.

As Fleury himself took no other title than that of one of the ministers, it was inevitable that he should maintain the old system of secretaries of state, to which D'Orleans had found himself compelled to return, and which Bourbon had retained. In the offices themselves he made some fresh appointments; Le Blanc, who had been secretary for war in the time of D'Orleans, had fallen under the displeasure of Madame de Prie, who had instigated a prosecution of him, and, though he was acquitted, had procured his banishment. But as he was a man of great ability, Fleury replaced him in his office. The finances he entrusted to Le Pelletier Desforts, who, after a few years, was succeeded by M. Orry. The marine he left in the hands of Maurepas; and the seals in those of D'Armenonville, transferring them after a time once more to the old Chancellor d'Aguesseau, who was at this moment in banishment, but was recalled by him in the course of 1727. But, in fact, his own authority in every department was so supreme, that the different secretaries were practically little more than chief clerks in their respective offices; and there will hardly be occasion to mention their names again.

In his foreign policy the cardinal, as we may henceforth call him, adhered to the principle established by the Regent, and placed his trust for the preservation of peace in the maintenance of the alliance with England. He felt a personal attachment, not unmingled with gratitude, to the English ambassador, Horace Walpole, the brother of the great English minister, who, with a shrewd and accurate judgment of which party was likely to get the upper hand, had hastened to pay him a visit on the occasion of his retreat to Issy; and after he was established as

minister, made a careful show of anxiety for his advice on all important affairs. And as Ripperda had no sooner become all-powerful in Spain than he began to menace both France and England if they ventured to oppose the line of policy which he intended to be the result of the alliance between Spain and the empire, the common danger, and the community of ideas, for peace was as much the leading feature of Sir Robert Walpole's policy as of Fleury's, naturally bound the two countries together more closely than ever. But while Fleury was both acute and firm in detecting and withstanding every effort made to detach him from England, he at the same time assumed a conciliatory demeanour towards Spain, thinking it not only impolitic but indecorous for Louis to be at enmity with his nearest relation. As soon as he became minister, he intimated to the Spanish court that he had had no share in the dismissal of the Infanta; he consented to remove De Morville from his office, because the part which he had taken in that measure had rendered him an object of dislike to Philip; and he had the satisfaction in the end of finding his policy so completely successful, that instead of being separated from his ally, he was able to divide his enemies. He made it so plain to the emperor that the war in which the Spaniards desired to engage him was intended to promote none but Spanish interests, that in May, 1727, Charles consented to conclude peace; and a treaty between France, England, Holland, and the Empire, was signed at Paris. Philip, though he held out for some time, soon found that he could do nothing single-handed; and in the spring of the next year he gave in his adhesion to the treaty, and consented to send a representative to a conference which

was held at Soissons in June; and which, though it settled nothing, was nevertheless effective and useful as a recognition of the existence of peace between the powers which had so long maintained an attitude of suspicion, if not of actual hostility towards each other.

His domestic policy may be divided into two parts, one confined to the court, the other affecting the kingdom in general. With respect to the first, he reversed the measures of the Regent; encouraging the king, who was well-inclined towards them, to restore to the legitimated princes the honours and privileges of which D'Orleans had deprived them, with the exception of the right to the succession; and both Maine and Toulouse returned to the neighbourhood of Paris. The princes themselves were both sufferers from bad health; within ten years they both died, one of cancer, the other of the stone; and even while they lived, their wives were the more important personages. The duchess was of a character too restless, too ambitious of effect, and too imperious to suit the taste of the king: but the Countess of Toulouse, who established herself at Rambouillet, and who, without so much pretence as her sister-in-law, was a high-bred and accomplished lady, formed a little court there, which Louis delighted to frequent; and her society for some time had a healthy influence on his disposition and habits. In this it coincided with the cardinal's wishes, who, among the other objects for which he was solicitous, had his heart greatly set on purifying the court from the scandal by which a long course of licentiousness had degraded it; and whose virtuous efforts in this direction so far succeeded that for above eight years it presented a model of propriety to the other courts of Christendom, which,

it must be confessed, at that time few of them cared to imitate.

Without being skilled in political economy, Fleury had sound notions on the elementary principles of finance ; he steadily checked all tampering with the currency, which had been a favourite resource of some of his predecessors, and by a resolute honesty he re-established the national credit so firmly that he was soon able to farm out the different branches of the revenue at a far higher price than any previous government had been able to obtain. And, being further aided by the fruits of the rigid frugality which he had established in every part of the state, he was in a very short time enabled to repeal those taxes, which under the government of Bourbon had caused the greatest discontent. In one matter alone were the principles of his administration vicious, and his practice mischievous ; and yet it was the very one on which it might have been most expected that his impartiality would have kept him free from error, religious toleration. He had at one time described himself as acceptable to all parties, from the very circumstance of his belonging to neither. The Jesuits, he said, could not blame him, for he was no Jansenist. The Quietists had no reason to complain of him, for they could not call him a Jesuit : the Jansenists might well be satisfied with him, for he was not a Molinist ; and in fact, his morality, undeviating as it was, had not its source in any deep religious feeling, so much as in an instinctive sense of and preference for propriety and respectability, combined with a coldness of temperament which rendered him inaccessible to vehement passion of every kind. But his admission into the sacred college seemed to him to have imposed on him the duty of more energetic service to the church

of which he had become a prince. He had instantly signalized it by granting to the French clergy immunities from several taxes which were levied on the laity; and he desired to gratify the Pope also, whose one object was to secure the universal reception of the Bull which had been a bone of contention to the nation ever since its promulgation, and which, in spite of its formal adoption in the time of Dubois, was, as has been already mentioned, still constantly evaded in practice. The reigning pope, Benedict XIII., on his accession to the tiara in 1724, had endeavoured to render it more acceptable to the adversaries of the Jesuits, by declaring that it was not inconsistent with the doctrines of St. Thomas Aquinas on the subject of grace; but this explanation of it was opposed with great fury by the Jesuits themselves, and by the party in the French church who called themselves the Constitutionalists, as acknowledging the constitution established by the Bull. They grew so violent that many Jansenists followed the example of the Huguenots, and fled to other countries; while others who remained behind sought to raise themselves a party among the populace, by producing instances of miracles which had been the result of some of their processions. One in particular, by which the wife of an artisan named Lafosse was affirmed to have been cured of an inveterate disease, was attested by a witness who was destined to make himself a name among the most distinguished ornaments of the national literature, but who had also already begun to render himself more unhappily conspicuous by his profanity and unbelief, Voltaire. He made himself merry at the invitation which he received from Cardinal de Noailles to attend a *Te Deum* which was performed in Notre Dame as a thanks-

giving for the miraculous cure. But though the odour of sanctity which he derived from his attendance at this act of worship in his case soon lost its fragrance, the acceptance on the part of the church of this miracle awakened in others less incredulous an anxiety to believe in similar interpositions of Providence; and in 1728 a number of supernatural cures were alleged to have relieved from a great variety of afflictions sufferers who paid visits to the tomb of a deacon named Paris, devoted to the Jansenist sect, who had lately died, and had been buried in the cemetery of St. Medard. They were of course regarded by the Jansenists as manifestations of the favour with which Heaven regarded their tenets; and the whole kingdom, and more especially the metropolis itself, was violently agitated by the accounts given of them, and by the vehement arguments of those who upheld and of those who sought to discredit them.* Some threw doubts on the fact of the cures, others denied the reality of the diseases. Dispassionate inquirers may doubt both, without attributing intentional imposture to those who alleged both. The afflictions said to be relieved were chiefly of a convulsive and temporary character, such as are often both produced and dispelled by any unusual excitement:† the same state of feeling would have at least an equal effect in inducing a firm belief in the genuineness of the miracles; so that those who disbelieve the reality of the miracles, are not, on that account, bound to stigmatize either the patients or the witnesses of their cure as deliberate impostors.

But such were not the opinions of those who at that time took either side of the question. The mild

* Voltaire Correspondence. Lettre de Août 20, 1725, quoted by Sismondi.

† See Paley's "Evidences of Christianity," ii. 2.

and somewhat passive inclination of Fleury to gratify the Pope was stimulated by Tencin, Archbishop of Embrun, a prelate if possible more infamous than Dubois himself. He had gained his preferment partly by conniving at the profligacy of his sister, who, having been a nun, fled from her convent to become the mistress of Dubois; and partly by his unscrupulous but efficacious service at Rome, where he had acted as the Abbé's agent in his solicitation for the seat in the sacred college. Tencin now wished to become a cardinal himself. He did not expect it to prove any obstacle to his pretensions that he had been convicted of both swindling and perjury, or that he was notorious for every kind of profligacy; and so far, as will be seen, he judged correctly. But, as he also felt it was necessary that he should do some active service to the church, to entitle him to the dignity which he sought, he thought none so easy as persecution; and he found it easy to bring Fleury over to his views.

The persecution which was now instituted stopped short of attacking the lives of those exposed to it; and the case which attracted the greatest attention was that of Soanen, the aged Bishop of Sercey, whom Tencin accused of having, in a pastoral letter, promulgated doctrines resembling those against which the Bull *Unigenitus* had been chiefly aimed. Fleury convoked a provincial council of fourteen bishops, which condemned the letter and banished the bishop; and when the Cardinal de Noailles, in his character of Archbishop of Paris, supported by twelve other bishops, took up the matter on behalf of the church itself, and appealed against both the Bull and the sentence to a general council, Fleury persuaded Louis to reprove him with great severity. De Noailles, an

aged man, whose vigour both of mind and body was almost exhausted, yielded to the reproof, and submitted to declare his acceptance of the Bull. The humiliation is believed to have killed him, for he died in the spring of 1729. But his submission did not terminate the strife. The Parliament was at all times zealous for the independence of the national church, and, being well aware that the same feeling animated the bulk of the nation, was glad to seize every opportunity of putting itself forward as its champion, in opposition to the Jesuit section of the priesthood. With this view it had lately resisted, and with success, the adoption of Gregory VII.* into the calendar as a saint. Benedict had made it one of his first acts to canonize that imperious founder of the secular power of the papacy; but the Parliament of Paris had refused to acknowledge the validity of the deed. Its example had been followed by the most important of the provincial parliaments, and even by a numerous body among the bishops, and probably Fleury himself was disinclined to see such honours bestowed on a prelate of a character so different from his own. On this point, therefore, he acquiesced in the national decision; but this concession made him only the more resolute to gratify the authorities at Rome in the other matter which he suspected them to have more at heart; and, with a view to settle the matter finally, in April, 1730, he summoned the Parliament to attend the king at a Bed of Justice, where they were compelled at once to register the Bull *Unigenitus*, and all the other Bulls which had been published on the subject of Jansenism; and

* "Gregory VII., who may be adored or detested as the founder of the Papal monarchy."—Gibbon, c. 69.

were forbidden to deliberate on them afterwards. For, since the rule had been established which made it an offence to delay for a single day any registration which was commanded by the king in person, it had become usual for the councillors to deliberate the day afterwards on what they had already done ; and the deliberation had often been followed by a remonstrance against giving permanent effect to the registration ; which in one or two instances had been allowed to produce some slight modification of the objectionable measure.

The Parliament now submitted to register the Bulls ; but it was resolved not to abandon without a struggle its practice of discussing its act afterwards ; and accordingly the next day, in spite of the royal prohibition, it assembled to take the whole subject into consideration, and found a leader, who by his clerical character was peculiarly fitted to be listened to on an ecclesiastical or theological question. The Abbé Pucelle was a man of learning and virtue, and, as a nephew of the celebrated Marshal Catinat, he had an hereditary right to courage and firmness, which seventy-five years had failed to enfeeble. He now proposed to the Parliament to adopt, not a formal protest against what had been done, but a declaration of the rights of the French church, which would be virtually tantamount to such a protest, and which seemed scarcely open to objection, since it was almost a repetition of a document drawn up nearly forty years before by Bossuet, as the mouth-piece of his brethren, and on that subject of the lay ministers also. It affirmed, among other articles, the absolute independence of the temporal power, as a direct institution of God ; the indispensableness of the sanction of the king to any canons of the church before they

could become laws of the State; and the responsibility of every minister of the church to the sovereign. In spite of the violent protest of the reigning Pope, Innocent XI., Louis XIV. had adopted Bossuet's view of the question, and had compelled the registration of a formal deed in which it was embodied; and it seems strange that any sovereign should have been so false to himself as to depart from his example. But the present Louis, even at a more mature age, had no opinion of his own on any matters of importance; and, so long as Fleury lived, he never dreamt of altering the relation in which they had once stood to each other as pupil and tutor, but followed his dictation with implicit obedience.

The Attorney-General, Joly de Fleury, supported Pucelle with great power of argument and eloquence; the Parliament, by a large majority, adopted his declaration. His namesake the cardinal, however, was resolute in his determination to uphold the pre-eminence of the spiritual power; he caused the Council of State at once to issue an edict annulling the vote of the Parliament; and, when that body reassembled the next year, Maurepas delivered to it a letter from the king, forbidding it to debate any ecclesiastical subject whatever. But Pucelle and his followers, encouraged by the knowledge that the feeling of the nation was strongly in their favour, were not disposed to yield this point either without a struggle. The contents of the royal letter were generally known, and the Parliament, by a majority similar to that which had passed the declaration, refused to open it, alleging that, in so doing, they were defending the authority of the king himself against the weakness of his minister. Maurepas threatened them with the penalties of rebellion if they persisted in their refusal.

They, in reply, announced their intention of appealing to Louis in person, and, as he was at Marly, they at once quitted the council chamber, and started off in a body for that which, of all the royal dwellings, seemed, by its appointments and appliances of luxurious indolence, the most incompatible with serious thoughts or weighty matters of state. The king and the courtiers who surrounded him were amazed at the approach of the cavalcade; he had no disposition to receive his unexpected visitors, but scarcely knew how to refuse them an audience, when to his great relief the cardinal arrived to tell him what was to be done. Fleury, who had been in Paris, had heard of the departure of the members, had hastened at full speed after them to prevent the king from being surprised into any concession; had outstripped them, and now announced to them the king's displeasure at their presumption in invading his retirement without permission, and ordered them, in his name, instantly to return to the capital. Their expedition seemed to him to have in it something amusingly ridiculous; for even while reproaching Pucelle, and others whom he looked on as the leaders, for their stubbornness and audacity, he could not refrain from repeating: "Coming to Marly! The idea of the Parliament coming to Marly. Good heavens! coming to the king at Marly!" But his humour was changed when, the next day, Pucelle and Joly de Fleury, still undaunted, proposed that, if they were not treated with greater respect, they should adjourn altogether, and suspend the performance of their judicial duties as well as that of the political privileges which they claimed, but which were thus denied them.

The cardinal was really alarmed at the thoughts of the confusion which might be caused by such a

step, and at his entreaty D'Aguesseau endeavoured to conciliate the offended councillors. As we have before said, the chancellor was inclined to the Jansenist tenets, but he was at least as much concerned for the maintenance of the royal authority as for that of orthodoxy. He succeeded in his mission but partially. The Grand Chamber listened to his advice ; but the Council des Enquêtes ridiculed it as weakness, and suspended their sittings. Their impracticability obtained the audience which before had been denied them, but they found that it did not advance their cause. The king now summoned the whole body to meet him ; but when they came into the presence they found that they were to be hearers only, not speakers. In brief and peremptory terms Louis reiterated the prohibition which had been conveyed in his letter. When the First President attempted to utter a few words, he was sternly commanded to be silent ; Pucelle, without speaking, laid at the monarch's feet a copy of the declaration which had been passed ; Maurepas seized it and tore it to pieces, with the king's manifest approval, and the same evening Pucelle, with five other members who had been prominent in their opposition to the court, was arrested, and banished. But their colleagues were more exasperated than alarmed ; some of the Chambers altogether suspended their sittings ; of those which did not, many individual members refused their attendance, and the citizens, who, in addition to their general inclination to support the Parliament against the Government, were at this crisis excited to enthusiasm in favour of Jansenism by the miracles which the buried relics of Deacon Paris continued to perform, showed their sympathy with the recusants by greeting them with vociferous cheers whenever they appeared ;

and by corresponding intimations of disapproval addressed to their more compliant colleagues. Once more D'Aguesseau was employed to coax the refractory councillors into obedience; and this time he was allowed to promise them a restoration of the right of remonstrance if they would resume the performance of their duties. They consented, but made such free use of the privilege conceded to them, as led to the banishment of not less than forty of their most influential members. The indignation not only of their brother councillors, but of the whole population of Paris, became vehement and universal; and there seemed every probability that the days of the Fronde might revive, in which the Parliament would have had a great and twofold advantage: one from being now forced to trust to themselves, instead of choosing for leaders incapable princes like Beaufort, or cruel and faithless ones like Condé; the other from having no antagonist to deal with of the craft of Mazarin or the valour of Turenne. But, for perhaps the first time in history, foreign war proved the deliverance of the country. The number of those who had joined in the outcry against the Government from a correct perception of the points at issue was scanty indeed when compared with the number of those who had been influenced by a weariness of inactivity and a desire for some excitement or other. Foreign war offered opportunities for more vigorous action, more sustained and honourable excitement, than civil war; and even those who might most easily have been roused to arm against the Government, with far greater willingness now placed their swords and lives at the disposal of their country for such a service.

Voltaire calls Fleury the most fortunate of men; as, till he was seventy-three, having been regarded as

one of the most amiable of companions, and for the remainder of his life having been esteemed one of the wisest of statesmen. Everything, he remarks, prospered with him.* Perhaps it is as remarkable an instance of his good fortune as any other that, even for the severities now exercised both against the Jansenists and against the Parliament, none of the unpopularity seems to have fallen upon him. The Jansenists themselves were more occupied with their vindication of the miracles at the cemetery of St. Medard, than with the larger contest in which their own freedom of conscience and the liberties of their national church were involved. For M. Vintimille, the new Archbishop who had succeeded De Noailles in the see of Paris, had taken a decided part against them; had issued a pastoral charge forbidding all invocation of the deceased deacon, and at last had shut up the cemetery altogether. And as, in addition to the arm of episcopal authority, and the heavy logic of the Jesuits, a band of wits, who practically believed in nothing at all, amused themselves with holding up the miracles and their champions to laughter, the Parliament, which, out of hatred of the Jesuits, had supported the genuineness of the miracles, came in for a large share of the ridicule; which greatly diminished the inclination of the citizens to support them in their struggle with the minister and with the court. The birth of a dauphin, which took place in the autumn of 1729, added to the strength of the Government by lessening the probability of any contest for the succession; and the only whisper of discontent with the cardinal personally came from so insignificant a party, the only attempt that was ever

* "Siècle de Louis XV.," c. 3.

made to displace him proceeded from persons so incapable of conducting or even contriving a formidable conspiracy, that it rather strengthened his position than shook his authority.

The Dukes of Gévres and Epéron were companions of Louis of his own age, who found the sobriety of the court irksome, and would have gladly seen him exchange his frugality and domestic habits, unkingly qualities as, from the practice of his predecessors, they judged them to be, for the sumptuous licence of former generations. The only chance of producing the desired change seemed to be in the removal of Fleury, to whose influence they attributed the existing state of affairs: and, as Louis had often allowed them without reproof to make merry in his presence on his old tutor's precision, and had even occasionally added his own jests to theirs, they thought he might not be unwilling to emancipate himself from his control, if the subject were skilfully placed before him.

With the assistance of the old Cardinal de Polignac, then French ambassador at Rome, who thought that, if a vacancy could be created in the Government, it might fall to his lot to fill it up, they drew up a memorial full of complaints of the minister's management both of the kingdom and of the palace, neatly but vigorously expressed, and presented it to Louis, who read it with attention; promised them that at all events the cardinal should never know of their machinations against him; and, to give them further assurance of secrecy, copied out the memorial with his own hand. Unhappily, as in his conduct towards the Duke de Bourbon he had shown himself possessed of a full share of the hereditary treachery of his race, he now proved himself as weak as he was faithless.

He took so little care of the copy which he made that it fell into the hands of one of his secretaries, who betrayed it to Fleury. Fleury, thinking the existence of such a document in the king's handwriting a proof that his immediate disgrace was at least in contemplation, at once repaired to the king's presence, and began to talk about a fresh retreat to Issy. He was well aware how childish the king's intellect still was, and how helpless he would feel without his accustomed guide. And his calculations of the effect of his threat were justified by the event. Louis showed him the original memorial, and, forgetful of his promise, gave him up the names of the authors. They had good cause to complain of the king, but still greater reason to be thankful that the minister against whom they had conspired was of the mild and forgiving disposition which they now experienced. Mazarin would probably have thrown them into the Bastille; Richelieu, still more probably, would have consigned them to the block. Fleury sent them back to their homes, as saucy and giddy boys, still needing the restraint of guardians and tutors; and after a year or two allowed them to return to the court, without ever giving the slightest sign of remembering their folly to their disadvantage. In France a good jest is at all times so acceptable, that even those who would not have been sorry to see the plot succeed were easily reconciled to their disappointment by the opportunity which it afforded for laughing at the boy conspirators. Their attempt was nicknamed the "Conspiracy of the Monkeys,"* and their failure deterred all others from laying themselves open to similar ridicule.

* "La conjuration des marmousets." Marmouset is, however, oftener applied to a metaphorical monkey—a mischievous urchin—than to a real simia.

CHAPTER XXV.

It was, perhaps, partly with the hope of maintaining peace by showing himself ready for war in the arm in which France had of late been weakest, that in 1728 Fleury sent a squadron to chastise the Tripoli corsairs, who in the course of their customary outrages on the merchantmen which traffic in the Mediterranean, had not spared the French commerce. The squadron destroyed the greater part of the city by a well-directed bombardment, and, to save the remainder, the Dey consented to indemnify the chief sufferers, and to abstain from a repetition of his injurious conduct. But, though the enterprise was thus entirely successful, the enemies whom it crushed were not so powerful as to lead other nations to read in their fate a lesson of the impolicy of offending France, and a series of unexpected events in the north of Europe overbore the cardinal's pacific resolutions, and plunged the kingdom once more into war. In 1733, Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, died; and his death gave rise, as usual, to an eager competition for the Polish crown. The constitution of that most unhappy of countries might seem to have been created for the express purpose of securing ceaseless disturbances at home, and a constant pretext for and succession of wars among its neighbours. The monarchy was elective; every noble

had a voice in the election, and almost every one who was not a slave was a noble.* In the vast plains around Warsaw, which alone could contain such a constituency, a hundred thousand such voters were wont to assemble on their war horses to decide on the affairs of the state, commonly by their conduct giving the lie to those political theorists who teach that the more numerous the electors are the more difficult it is to corrupt them; for the Polish nobles were habitually covetous of bribes, and sold themselves to the worst of bribers for their country's peace, foreign princes or foreign ministers. On this occasion the son of the late king, the new Elector of Saxony, was one candidate, and at the same time, with the promise of aid from Fleury, Stanislaus Leczinski sought his restoration to the throne from which, as we have seen, he had once been expelled. Having deterred the adherents of Augustus from appearing, a necessary precaution, since a single adverse vote could invalidate the proceedings of the most numerous majority, the partisans of Stanislaus, 60,000 in number, unanimously elected him king.

But Augustus could also allege a vote in his favour which, though subsequent to the nomination of Stanislaus, and supported by a far smaller number of voices, was yet sufficient for one who had a better appointed army than his competitor, and whose supporters, the sovereigns of Austria and Russia, were nearer to the Polish frontier than the only ally of Stanislaus. An army of 50,000 Russians, commanded by the Count de Munich, one of the ablest of the foreign officers whom the penetrating genius of Peter

* "Ce pays où la peuple est esclave, où la noblesse vend ses suffrages," is Voltaire's description of their usual course and motive of action.—*"Siècle de Louis XV.,"* c. 4.

the Great had allured into his service, instantly poured over the border; drove Stanislaus from his capital to seek refuge in Dantzic; and, pursuing him to that city, invested it on all sides but that which looked towards the sea. Fleury had evidently never anticipated so vigorous a step on the part of the Russian empress; and the whole force which he sent round to the Baltic to support the election of his sovereign's father-in-law, did not exceed 1500 soldiers, with a squadron of frigates even less formidable. It was plain that such a scanty force must be useless against such a host of enemies as threatened Dantzic, and at first it seemed as if it was not intended for any object beyond a demonstration of the opinions and desires of France. When, on its arrival off the mouth of the Vistula, Lamotte, its commander, learnt the true condition of affairs, he at once turned back to Copenhagen without making any attempt for the relief of the besieged town. But the French ambassador at the Danish court, the Count de Plélo, was a man of more fearless temper. He looked on Lamotte's retreat as a stigma on his whole nation, and earnestly besought the regimental officers to return to Dantzic, and make an effort for the deliverance of the king, whom Munich, with the design as it was supposed of putting him to death, required the citizens to surrender to him. "It was," said one of the officers, "a safe demand for a man to make who himself was sitting securely in his closet." But Plélo had no such thought, and offered to head the enterprise if they would submit to his authority. They consented to return; and the ambassador, having first written to Chauvelin, the Foreign Secretary, to recommend his wife and children to his protection, since he had no hope of seeing them again, reinforced

his scanty band with a few Danish volunteers, and at once set sail.

His forebodings were too well verified. The besiegers had so nearly surrounded the city that he was compelled to disembark at a short distance from the gates, to which, sword in hand, he endeavoured to force his way. For a brief moment the Russians recoiled before the vivacity of his attack, but they soon rallied; and there could be but one end to a contest in which men, however dauntless, were engaged with twenty times their own numbers. Plélo himself fell among the foremost, pierced with fifteen musket balls; and of his followers, all who did not share his fate were forced to surrender. After five months of heroic resistance, Dantzic capitulated. Stanislaus, who had set the garrison a noble example of valour and resolution as long as the slightest hope remained, facilitating the surrender by escaping in disguise the very last day of the siege. It could hardly be said that he was safer for being outside the walls, so entirely was the whole surrounding district in the hands of Munich's troopers, and so unwearied were their efforts to earn the large reward which the victorious general had set upon his head. Every house was searched, every ford and pass was guarded. After weeks of hardship and imminent danger, while he lurked under hedges and amid marshes by day, and made slow and cautious progress by night, the very season aggravating his perils by the brilliancy of the summer moon, the hapless prince at last reached Marienwerden on the Vistula, a Prussian town, where his enemies could no longer follow him, and where he was joined by many of his adherents, who, however, were in no condition to struggle against the overwhelming power of Russia. Augustus became undisputed king of

Poland, and Stanislaus proved, by an unexpected stroke of good fortune, to be reserved for a happier destiny, becoming the ruler of a more fertile territory in a happier climate.

But his connexion with Louis, and the efforts which France, in consequence, had made to assist him, had committed France to a war with Austria; and indeed the Polish succession was not the only cause of quarrel between the two countries. In the reconciliation of France and Spain the latter country had been the chief gainer, since, by a treaty recently concluded at Seville, France had agreed to support some claims advanced by the Infante Don Carlos to the throne of Naples; and the succession of another Spanish prince, his younger brother Don Philip, to the duchies of Parma and Piacenza, and on the death of the reigning duke, the last of the great Medici family, to Tuscany. Another treaty had bound both France and Spain to aid the King of Sardinia in subduing the Milanese, the chief possession of the House of Austria below the Alps; and in this enterprise France was to bear the principal burden, furnishing Charles Emmanuel with a large subsidy and 40,000 troops. This treaty had been chiefly the work of Chauvelin, who, in the view of foreign politicians, had by it trepanned Fleury into war. But, in fact, French statesmen for many generations had looked on the presence of an Austrian viceroy and army in Italy as both a discredit and a danger to France; and though Fleury was generally anxious for peace, he probably was not very reluctant to attack Austria at a moment when he was strengthened by such alliances in the south, and when, in the impending war, the emperor's northern allies could be of little or no service to him.

With these views, while Stanislaus was travelling

from Alsace to Warsaw to secure his election as king of Poland, Fleury declared war against the emperor, and supported his declaration by an instant invasion of the imperial territories in two quarters by armies which he placed under the command of those renowned veterans, Berwick and Villars. Berwick had under him a splendid staff; D'Asfeld, as an engineer, one of the ablest of Vauban's successors; the Duke de Richelieu and the Duke de Noailles, both marshals, both destined hereafter to the chief command of armies, and remarkable, the one for his ill fortune, the other for his success, which in each case was equally undeserved. To these was added a younger officer of far more brilliant talents, and eventually of a renown which overshadowed the fame of all his contemporaries, Maurice of Saxony, a son of the late King of Poland, who was bound to French interests by the injurious conduct of Russia, which had expelled him from Courland after the states of that duchy had conferred its sovereignty on him. With these officers and 100,000 men the victor of Almanza hastened to the Rhine, but victory had no more wreaths in store for him. Saxe, indeed, whom he sent forward to secure a passage across the river, took Kehl almost without resistance, and in the spring of 1734 he himself moved forward to attack the Austrian army under Eugene. That great soldier, so long the bulwark of the empire, retired before him. The whole Austrian army did not exceed 35,000 men; and in the previous year, when the question of supporting Augustus at the probable cost of a war was debated in the Vienna cabinet, Eugene had given a decided and earnest opinion against it, on grounds which were eminently complimentary to Fleury's administration. He told the imperial ministers plainly that the empire was

now far from being a match for France, which was, both in the strength of her armies and the condition of her finances, in a better state than at any previous period of her history ; that she was under a sagacious and vigorous administration ;* and that, trust as they might in the alliance with Russia, France would have invaded them on the side of both Germany and Italy before they could receive the aid of a single Muscovite soldier. He was overruled: the Austrian ministers persuaded their master that, however threatening an attitude Fleury might assume, he would never really embark in war. But they found themselves deceived, and Eugene's predictions were verified by events. Berwick easily drove him to concentrate his lines at Ettlingen, which required an army three times as large as his to hold them, and, pressing onward, laid siege to Philipsburg; but, while reconnoitering the defences he was killed by a cannon ball. He was envied his warrior's death by his gallant opponent, and by his brother marshal,† who, harassed by continual disputes with Charles Emmanuel in Italy, was sinking into the grave under the mingled effects of old age and vexation, and sincerely regretted by his comrades. Brave, skilful, conspicuous for his humanity after victory, and for his good faith at all times, he left behind him a renown for those days singularly

* "Je ne le reconnais [l'honneur de l'État] dis-je aux ministres, que lorsqu'il est soutenu par de plus grands moyens. Ceux de la France n'ont jamais été si prêts: ses finances sont dans le meilleur état possible, par vingt ans de paix. À peine en avons nous dix depuis celle de Westphalie: c'est-à-dire depuis quatre-vingt ans. Son ministère est sage."—"Mémoires de Prince Eugène," p. 164.

† Villars remarked on hearing of his death: "Cet homme-là a toujours été heureux."—Lacretelle, ii. 155. Eugene says: "J'en fus jaloux; et c'est la première fois de ma vie que je l'ai été."—"Mémoires," 169.

free from stain of any kind. It was well for England that his father had not his talents; but even without them, had he possessed his virtues, he might have lived and died on his throne, and Berwick's honours might have been won in the service of his native country.

But his fall could not save Philipsburg. He had planned his approaches with great judgment; and D'Asfeld, who succeeded to the command, completed his entrenchments with such skill that, in the opinion of Eugene, who, according to his invariable custom, reconnoitred them in person, they were absolutely unassailable, except by a vast superiority of force. The prince had received some reinforcements of Hessians, Hanoverians, and Prussians, the latter under the command of the Prince Royal of Prussia, whose conduct both in the field and in council gave Eugene a high idea of his capacity for war, without either suspecting at that moment that it was hereafter to be displayed at the expense of Austria herself.* But he was still far from equal to the French in numbers, and D'Asfeld proved well able to avail himself of his superiority. While encouraged by his strength to venture on the most audacious attacks, he was at the same time as cautious as if his had been the weaker army; and, to the astonishment of Eugene, he was admirably supported by those from whom enterprise and hardihood seemed least to be expected. Eugene had known Richelieu at Vienna, and had thought

* Eugene was so far from anticipating any future hostility from Prussia, that in 1732, when he met Frederic's father the king, at Prague, "Je lui conseillai d'amasser bien de l'argent et bien des hommes pour nous défendre si nous étions attaqués; car mon système était, comme on l'a vu, de ne pas faire la guerre mais une barrière contre la France, pour lui ôter l'envie de nous attaquer."—"Mémoires," p. 162.

him a mere voluptuous sybarite, whose whole soul was given up to gambling and intrigue ; but he now found to his surprise that there was nothing effeminate in his luxuriousness, but that, like Paris in Troy, he and the whole band of perfumed courtiers who were now serving their first campaign, were as fearless in encountering danger, and even as resolute in enduring hardship, as the rudest troopers.* The river, which was swollen by unusual floods, greatly increased the difficulties of the siege. The water came up even to the officers' tents, and the reliefs were often obliged to proceed in boats to their appointed posts. The garrison made a stout but hopeless resistance. Eugene could not venture to aid them by any regular attack of the besiegers' works, because his army, small as it was, was the sole force on which Vienna could rely for its defence. From some batteries which he erected on a slightly rising ground, he commanded the French camp from a distance. But D'Asfeld was not to be diverted from his object by any trifling loss. At the end of seven weeks Philipsburg surrendered, and Eugene fell back, by the consummate skill of his manœuvres at one time covering Swabia, and at another effectually protecting Mayence, which the Frenchman had hoped to add to his trophies. But, though great in sieges, he was no match for Eugene in the open field, and Marshal de Coigny, who had the chief command the next year, was still less so. By turning the course of some small streams above Ettlingen, the prince in 1735 surrounded his lines

* "Ce diable d'homme [D'Asfeld] pensait à tout. . . . Quelle nation, capable de tout ! Richelieu, qui j'avais connu si délicat, sybarite, voluptueux, et les jeunes gens de la cour, les Ducas, les la Vallière, étaient métamorphosés. Il ne leur faut qu'un chef. D'Asfeld était un Spartiate sévère, et de bon exemple ; et avant lui Berwick leur en imposait."—*Ibid.*, 170.

with an inundation which rendered them impregnable, and, while thus reducing the French army to complete inaction, he even gained advantages over some of its scattered detachments, and protected Trèves from another army, with which the Count de Belleisle was posted on the Moselle. It was his last service. In the spring of 1736 he died, full of years and honours. In co-operation with Marlborough he had humbled the power of France, and had beaten the most renowned of the French marshals. Unassisted he had turned back the tide of Turkish conquest, and by his victory at Belgrade had saved the empire.

In Italy the losses of the Austrians were, on the whole, far more severe and important, though the events of the campaign were more chequered. In that country their forces were weaker than even their army on the Rhine in proportion to the enemies they had to encounter. In the autumn of 1733 Villars, with 40,000 men, joined Charles Emmanuel, who had succeeded his father, Victor Amédée, on the throne of Sardinia, and who had now 18,000 men available for active operations, while Count Daun, now Governor of Milan, and destined at a later day to measure himself not ingloriously with the great Frederic, had but 12,000 men with whom to oppose them; and with such a handful of men he could, in fact, offer them no opposition at all. It was the last week in October before the old marshal (he was 81 years of age) joined his army at Vercelli, but in ten days he and his ally had made themselves masters of the greater part of Lombardy and of the city of Milan itself, though a sufficient garrison still held the castle. Since it was evident that it could not escape, Villars proposed to the king to disregard it for the time, and turning all his atten-

tion against the force in the field, to drive it to the Tyrol, and thus make himself master of all the passes of the Alps. But Charles Emmanuel was too deeply imbued with the principles of his father's policy not to be jealous of his allies, and, rejecting the advice, declined to move till he had reduced the castle also. That held out till the last day of the year, when the garrison capitulated on being permitted to retire to Mantua; and the spring of 1734 could hardly be said to have begun before all the other Lombard fortresses, with the exception of that, the strongest of all, had opened their gates. Villars was greatly irritated at such a plan of operations, by which much valuable time was lost which might have been more usefully devoted to the attack of the great fortress on the Mincio, but he toiled on for some time longer with all the energy of his earlier manhood, on one occasion even heading a charge, and cutting his way through a superior force which tried to intercept the king and him while employed on a reconnaissance. Charles Emmanuel could not restrain the expression of his astonishment at the vigour and activity displayed by the aged warrior. "Sire," said the brave old man, "they are the last sparks of my life, for I think this will prove my last field of battle, and with this exploit I bid war farewell." His feelings were prophetic; a few days later he became so unwell that his friends advised him to seek a short rest at a distance from the army; and when he took leave, the king, who had not concealed his displeasure at one in the rank of a subject, though the oldest soldier in Europe, differing from him in opinion, parted from him with a marked coldness, which, by the mortification which it caused him, aggravated his malady. He reached Turin

at the beginning of June, and died there on the 17th, the day after he had heard of and envied the soldier-like end of his old comrade at Philipsburg.

It was owing to a remarkable piece of good fortune that the petulant and ungrateful monarch did not find cause bitterly to regret the loss of a coadjutor of such valour, energy, and experience. For the loss of Milan had awakened the Austrian Government to the necessity of making its utmost efforts for the preservation of Mantua; and before the spring of 1734 had well begun, they sent the Count de Mercy, the great-grandson of the antagonist of Condé and Turenne, with 60,000 men, to recover the ground lost in the previous campaign. In their whole army, Mercy, for military energy and decision, had no superior but Eugene; but, fortunately for the allies, while preparing to advance, he was prostrated by a stroke of apoplexy; which, as three months elapsed before he was again fit for service, delayed his operations till May, just as Villars was quitting his army for Turin. This command was now divided between two marshals, the Duke de Coigny and the Count de Broglie; the latter had, as we have seen, thirty years before made himself remarkable by his vigorous treatment of the Camisards; the former had no military experience whatever. But their seniority in the army had recently procured for both the marshal's staff, and as they were both, though unskilful, yet in point of bravery worthy of their country and their birth, they were eager for an opportunity of justifying their new promotion.

Charles Emmanuel had quitted the army, which was spread along the right bank of the Po, in the neighbourhood of Guastalla, when Mercy, at the beginning of June, suddenly threw his army across

the river, and drove De Coigny to the southward. Pressing him with great vigour, on the 29th he came up with him under the walls of Parma, and, though the Frenchman had found time to fortify himself in a strong position, at once attacked him. A battle of unusual stubbornness ensued. Where the result depended on the gallantry of the men, the French had the superiority; where the skill of the rival commanders could produce its due effect, they were no match for the Austrians. And the tactical science and rapid decision of Mercy were rapidly turning the scale in his favour when he fell mortally wounded by a ball from a light field-piece. The Prince of Wurtemberg, who succeeded to the command, and the Count de la Tour, the next in rank, were presently both driven from the field by severe wounds, and the Austrian army for the rest of the day was left to the regimental officers. They fought gallantly till night, when they retreated and left the field of battle to the French, who, as a second evidence of their victory, could point to the fact that their killed and wounded, though not fewer than 5000, scarcely equalled half the amount of the Austrian loss. Trophies of the sanguinary engagement could be displayed by neither side; for it is remarked, as a circumstance almost unexampled in the history of war, that neither army lost a single standard, or gun, or prisoner.

Both armies rested for awhile, watching for an opportunity of delivering a more decisive blow. To replace Mercy, Count Konigsegg was immediately sent from Vienna; and he also soon showed his superiority in military science to the new French commanders. Having been moving to the eastward since the battle of Parma, the two armies were now on the Secchia, a small river which, passing close to Modena, falls into

the Po about fifteen miles below Guastalla, the Austrians on the right bank, the French on the left ; but, though the French had been in this position for some weeks, there was so little vigilance or management in their generals that they had never discovered a ford which was close at hand, and, thinking the river a sufficient protection, kept but little guard. Konigsegg, however, the moment that he arrived, exploring the banks of the river, soon ascertained the existence and situation of the ford, and, on the night of the 14th of September, he threw 10,000 men across it under the Prince of Wurtemberg, while another division, under the Prince of Waldeck, surprised a bridge higher up the river, which was slenderly and carelessly defended, and the two princes, now both on the same side of the river as the French, came down upon both their flanks at once. The surprise was complete. Wurtemberg forced his way into Broglie's camp, who had barely time to spring from his bed, and, clad only in his shirt, to jump on the horse of the aide-de-camp who brought him news of what was happening. Waldeck had equal good fortune, making himself master without resistance of the tents of Coigny and the King of Sardinia. Had the princes been able to keep their men in hand, and to prevent them from straggling in quest of plunder, the French army would have been almost annihilated ; but the temptation of pillaging the tents of both the marshals and of the king, which glittered with costly plate, and which contained also the military chests, proved too strong for the Germans, and at least as many devoted themselves to plundering as to fighting and pursuing the allies. They at first had retreated in great disorder ; but after some time the leaders succeeded in rallying their men to make a stand, and a fierce con-

flict ensued. Waldeck was killed, and his regimental officers, fearing to separate themselves from their main body by carrying the pursuit too far, fell back and recrossed the river; but they carried back with them nearly 4000 prisoners, and a prodigious amount of booty of all kinds.* They had also completely checked the advance of the allies, who the next day fell back to Guastalla. Thither Konigsegg pursued them, and four days afterwards brought them once more to action, but not with equal success. He had no longer the advantages of a surprise on his side; the numbers indeed were slightly in his favour, but French troops under resolute leaders have generally proved far superior to those of any other continental nation, and their leaders on this day were stimulated to redoubled exertions in order to efface the stain which the neglect of the Secchia had left on their reputations. The battle lasted all day; the Italian plains had witnessed no such slaughter since the days of Ravenna and Pavia. The killed and wounded amounted to not less than 16,000 men, the loss being equally divided between the two armies; but in officers the loss fell most heavily on the Austrians, among whom the Princes of Wurtemberg and Saxe-Gotha were killed. The allies also retained possession of the field of battle, while Konigsegg fell back to Luzzara, and subsequently retired behind the Po.

The next year Coigny was transferred, as we have already mentioned, to the army of the Rhine, and the Duke de Noailles was sent to take the chief command of the French contingent in Piedmont. But he found the troops, as soon after his arrival he wrote to

* It is remarkable that while no French historian represents the prisoners as less than 3500, Lacretelle carrying it to 4000, Coxe, writing as the historian of the Empire, reduces the number to 2000.

D'Angernonville, the war minister, in such a state of disorganization as to be hardly fit for any important enterprise; the marshes of the Po, amid which the chief scene of their operations had for some time lain, had bred fevers and agues in their camp, which had so filled the hospitals with invalids that, though 10,000 infantry and cavalry were sent during the winter to reinforce the army, it scarcely numbered half the number of fighting men around its standards that it had had at the beginning of the previous campaign; while it was deficient in almost every kind of supply, through the negligence of the regimental officers, who paid attention to nothing but their own sensual and licentious gratifications. The Austrians were not in much better condition, though there had been no such culpable neglect in their management. But in the spring of 1735 Konigsegg could not reckon above 30,000 men available for active service; and was forced to limit his exertions to the preservation of Mantua, which, so long as it was safe, ensured his master the recovery of his lost ground whenever he should be able to resume the offensive; in fact, the battle of Guastalla was the last important event in the war on the Italian side; and, before the end of the year, the antagonists all began to weary of the war, and to treat for peace. In the winter of 1733, the Spaniards also had taken the field. The Duke de Mortemar landed at Leghorn at the head of 20,000 men, and accompanied by the Infante Don Carlos, a youthful prince of eighteen; and with this slight force, in the spring of 1734, he overran the kingdom of Naples, entered the metropolis, and compelled the recognition of the Infante as its king; crossed over to Sicily, and, though Messina made a stout resistance, by the beginning of 1735 he had subdued the whole

island, and returned to Italy. Passing on rapidly to the northward, he overran Tuscany and the provinces south of the Po, and crossing that great river, proceeded to invest Mantua. But the advantages of his success to the common cause were more than counter-balanced by his arrogance, which he displayed even to the King of Sardinia as fully as to the French commander, and which indisposed both to co-operate with him; and which made Fleury more eager than ever to terminate the alliance with Spain by a general peace.

The emperor was equally willing to lay down his arms; he had been disappointed in his hopes of obtaining assistance from England, and was forced to acknowledge to himself that his resources were quite unequal to the maintenance of a single-handed war against the triumvirate of his enemies; moreover, he desired not only peace, but an early peace, while Mantua, the garrison of which was greatly enfeebled by disease, was still safe. Fleury was equally desirous to lose no time. He knew that a strong party in the English Government, including, as was pretty notorious, George II. himself, was eager for war, and he doubted whether Walpole would be able or even inclined long to preserve his existing attitude of neutrality; and it was manifestly above all things important to prevent such an accession to the ranks of his enemies. Yet, if all the combatants were to be made parties to the negotiation much time must inevitably be lost. He therefore resolved to treat in the first instance for France alone, justly thinking that his allies would have no fair ground of complaint against him if he reserved to them a power to join in any treaty which might be concluded. The Austrian minister was equally willing to treat with France by

herself, and in May the negotiations were opened at Vienna.

Considering how many important interests were involved in them, they were brought to a practical conclusion in a comparatively short time. The first week in October the preliminaries were signed between Louis and Charles; and though some time still elapsed before they were ratified by a definitive treaty, and still more before Spain and Sardinia could be brought to agree to them, all active operations of war were at once terminated. The emperor was the chief loser, though the territories which he was forced to abandon had been possessions of more dignity than profit. He lost Naples and Sicily and a portion of the Milanese, but he obtained Parma and Piacenza, which by hereditary right would have devolved on Don Carlos, whose mother was a princess of Parma; while France and Sardinia added now their guarantees to the Pragmatic Sanction, a measure which he had greatly at heart as securing his succession to his daughter. Spain gained Naples and Sicily for the Infante. As a compensation for Parma and Piacenza, Sardinia received some important districts which had previously been attached to Milan. But the great gainer was France; she was unable indeed to preserve Poland for Stanislaus, but she procured him an indemnity which was far superior to it in all desirable qualifications except the kingly dignity. Gaston de Medici, Duke of Tuscany, the last of his line, had been compelled a few years before to appoint Don Carlos his heir. When Don Carlos became King of Naples his right of succession to Tuscany was transferred to his younger brother Don Philip; but by this treaty the claims of Don Philip were set aside. Duke Francis of Lorraine, who was about to marry

the Archduchess Maria Teresa, was compelled, somewhat unwillingly, to exchange his present possession of Lorraine for the succession to Tuscany. And Lorraine was allotted to Stanislaus, on whose death it was to pass to his daughter, Queen Marie, to be incorporated with the French dominions. If anything had hitherto been wanting to Fleury's good fortune, it was now supplied by the circumstance of his thus, as the fruit of this short and unimportant war, having made an acquisition for France which Richelieu and Louvois had striven for in vain. Stanislaus, indeed, lived to enjoy his new dominions for thirty years, but France could well afford to wait for the operation of nature now that she had secured the eventual possession of so rich an inheritance, which was equally valuable in time of peace and of war. As a peaceful possession Lorraine gave her 9000 square miles, exceeded by no part of her territories for fertility and salubrity, and a territory embellished with the ancient glories of Nancy, Metz, and a score of other scarcely inferior cities. Looked at with an eye to war, Lorraine rounded off her frontier in the west, and could never again afford a path for her enemies into the very heart of the country, and within 150 miles of Paris. And so forcibly have these considerations influenced the French historians, that Lacretelle does not hesitate to class the dowry which Marie Leczinska thus brought her husband with the inheritance of Eleanor of Guienne or Anne of Brittany, and indirectly to compare the treaty by which it was secured to the Peace of Nimeguen, the crowning glory of Louis XIV. And a still more emphatic eulogy is pronounced by Voltaire, who affirms the war to have been the only one which had produced France any solid success

since the days of Charlemagne, and the peace to have preserved to her the proud position of arbitress of Europe.*

The re-establishment of peace favoured the further development and augmentation of the national resources, which, under Fleury's paternal care, made an improvement as progressive and steady as when they were watched over by the more vigorous genius of Colbert or Sully. His method was simpler than theirs. He neither sought to fetter trade by artificial restrictions, nor to drive it into unnatural channels by monopolies. His system was merely to let it alone, and to relieve the whole population by reducing the taxation to the lowest point; and the order and economy which he had introduced into every department of the administration enabled him to give such relief to an extent and with a promptitude that surpassed all expectation. Even the expenses of war, which in the preceding reign had been so overwhelming, he had met by the single imposition of an income-tax of ten per cent., and though by the terms according to which it was imposed it would have been perfectly consistent with good faith if he had retained it for three years after the conclusion of war,† he nevertheless repealed it at once in the first year of the peace. It has been urged against him, even by

* "Siècle de Louis XV.," c. 4.

† "Though the peace was practically concluded in November, 1735, by the signature of the preliminaries, the negotiations, which were protracted to an unusual degree of tediousness, were not finally concluded till November, 1738. When the definitive treaty was at last signed at Vienna, it was not till the spring of 1739 that Spain, Sardinia, and the new King of Naples ratified their accession to it. Fleury, in imposing the income-tax, had only bound himself to take it off on the publication of peace; but he did not wait till that time, but repealed it at the end of 1736—two years and a half before the tax-payers could claim such relief."—Lacretelle, ii. 178.

historians who are generally not unfriendly to his fame, that it would have been a wiser policy to have maintained the tax for the period originally fixed, and for the remainder of its duration to have devoted its proceeds to the augmentation of the navy.* And if it had been in the state of decay or weakness which seems to be implied by such a complaint, the reproach would be well founded, since the very first duty of the ruler of such a kingdom as France is to keep her warlike establishment on such a footing as to be always formidable both by land and sea; and a proverb two thousand years old, truly affirms such a preparation for war to be the best preservation of peace. But the truth is, that Fleury did not neglect the navy, but left it at his death in a state of complete adequacy to all the services likely to be required of it; of decided superiority to that of every other country but Great Britain. To that nation France had never been equal on the sea;† but it was also the nation which Fleury believed to be the most firmly united to France by mutual interest, a surer bond than any formal treaty; and at the time of which we are speaking he could not foresee that faction would drive Walpole from power, or that after his own death his successor would readopt the cause of the Stuarts, and

* "Des hommes d'Etat gèrent de ce que le Cardinal de Fleury n'avait point employé à l'accroissement de la marine française une ressource qu'il pouvait prolonger sans de graves inconvénients. L'événement ne tarda pas à justifier leurs regrets."—Ibid. 179.

† Voltaire, "Siècle de Louis XV.," c. 35, going back for examples as far as the wars of the fourteenth century, treats the naval superiority of England as an unquestionable and unalterable fact, which he endeavours to account for by reasons founded on the natural situation of each kingdom: "Quelle est la raison de cette supériorité continuelle? N'est-ce pas que les Anglais ont besoin de la mer, dont les Français peuvent à toute force se passer, et que les nations réussissent toujours, comme on l'a déjà dit, dans les choses qui leur sont absolument nécessaires?"

provoke England to war with the hopeless aim of reseating that banished race on her throne.

In truth there was nothing unstatesmanlike in Fleury's public economy, nothing sordid in his domestic frugality, nothing inquisitorial in his management; and these qualities won him the greater respect and the more cordial co-operation, because it was manifest to the most envious that he was not accumulating or saving for himself. But while he was thus successful in increasing the prosperity of the people by his public policy, and, though the most peaceful of ministers, triumphant in the fruits he reaped from war, he was not aware, till the mischief was done, that others were undermining his influence with the king, and were leading him into habits which speedily eradicated all the lessons of virtue which he had formerly instilled into his pupil, and eventually placed the whole government in the hands of the most worthless persons of both sexes whom the kingdom could furnish. The courtiers, whom the evil example of D'Orleans and Bourbon had rendered even more dissolute than Louis XIV. had left them, bore with impatience the decorum which the cardinal had reintroduced, and made more than one attempt to procure his dismissal, which always recoiled on their own heads. Chauvelin, the secretary of state, endeavoured to traverse his foreign policy, but his treachery was discovered, and he was deprived of his office; and the Dukes d'Antin and de la Tremoille, who endeavoured to work on Louis to revoke his decision and prefer the secretary to the chief minister, found that they could not trust the king to keep their secret or his own promise; but that he betrayed them to the cardinal, who gave a severe reprimand to the one and banished the other. Those, therefore, who

would be more successful, were forced to employ less open methods to gain their end ; and Richelieu, the most corrupt and abandoned of the whole body of nobles, whose sole occupation was gallantry, and whose sole boast was his success in seduction, has the degrading honour of having planned and executed the intrigues by which other influences over the mind of Louis were gradually substituted for those of his minister and his wife.

It was an unfortunate circumstance in his favour that there was no good understanding between the queen and the cardinal, and that Marie herself, though virtuous, gentle, and attractive in person, was deficient in the address, and even in the assiduity of affection requisite to keep alive the feeling of attachment in a person so reserved, so indolent, and so little intellectual as Louis. Fleury, while honestly desirous that no other woman should have influence over the king, was yet weak enough to desire that his own should be paramount to hers ; and Marie, whose health was originally not strong, and was soon impaired by the rapid succession of her confinements, gradually fell into an almost morbid state of mind, often repelling her husband's advances, and addicting herself almost wholly to works of charity and devotion, which latter quality she often displayed in unseasonable prayers of excessive length when he sought her company, and sometimes even in conjugal lectures on his dawning passion for excess. For Richelieu and his companions, unable at once to entangle him with a mistress, had been more successful in inoculating him with a passion for play and for drinking, and he often returned to the queen's apartments reeking of champagne and scarcely able to stand. There were those about the persons of the sovereigns who too

faithfully reported these disagreements, the king's intoxication, the queen's reproaches, and, again, the king's impatience, to the conspirators; the worst of whom, next to Richelieu himself, was Mademoiselle de Tencin, who since the death of Dubois had been equally familiar with half Paris, and who, little as she was trammelled by the propriety and decorum of the court, longed for the return of the open licence of the Regency. At last it became known to them that Louis and Marie had had a violent quarrel; that she had refused him admittance to her apartments, and that he, in his anger, had sworn that he would never again ask it; and, as they thoroughly appreciated his character, and knew that he was as obstinate as he was weak, they made no doubt that the moment of their success was at hand; that they had only to find a proper instrument to captivate the royal fancy, and that everything else would proceed according to their wishes as a matter of course.*

They were aided in their nefarious machinations by the circumstance of a lady of the court, of good family, youth, and a sufficient amount of beauty, having fallen in love with Louis, as Mademoiselle de la Vallière had become enamoured of his great-grandfather before she was acquainted with him. Madame de Mailly was the eldest of five daughters of a Marquis de Nesle, whose ancient birth and high rank had not preserved him from falling into very narrow circumstances. She, indeed, was not personally affected by his want of means, since she was married to her cousin

* "Le roi n'entrait guère le soir dans son appartement sans qu'elle lui reprochât l'odeur du vin de champagne qu'il apportait avec lui, et son état approchant de l'ivresse: ou bien elle feignit de dormir, ou bien encore elle prolongeait indéfiniment ses prières, pourqu'il s'endormit le premier."
—Sismondi, viii. 48.

the Count de Mailly, so much as her younger sisters. But it would seem from the result that the whole family had been brought up in the idea that to become mistress to the king was the pinnacle of happiness and honour for a Frenchwoman. When it was seen that she would be willing to comply, there were plenty of go-betweens; Mademoiselle de Charolais, a cousin of Louis, also putting herself forward to co-operate with Richelieu and Mademoiselle Tencin. And some time before the breaking out of the war of 1733 those in the secret were aware that Louis had been effectually seduced from his wife, through Madame de Mailly; who, to complete the resemblance of her character and fortunes to those of La Vallière, was shy, modest, and gentle in her demeanour and disposition, withdrew herself from general notice as far as possible, and succeeded so far that more than two years elapsed before the queen suspected that she had a rival. But the reign of Madame de Mailly did not last long; she soon began to feel the degradation of her position, and an additional edge was given to her repentance by the discovery not only that she too had a rival, but that that rival came from her own family. She herself was pleasing rather than beautiful, and too timid to be a lively companion. But the second Mademoiselle Nesle, though in features inferior to her, was remarkable for liveliness of manners, sprightliness of wit, and general powers of fascination. She was also of a restless and ambitious temper, and having conceived the idea that if she could acquire influence over Louis, she might rule the State, she resolved to supplant her sister. She had no difficulty in placing herself on terms of equal familiarity with the king, though at first he would not part from his earlier favourite. Since, as soon as the consequences of

her intimacy with him became apparent, etiquette required that she also should be provided with a husband, the Marquis de Vintimille was induced, by a dowry of 200,000 livres, to make her his marchioness, and all difficulties in the way of her unrestrained intercourse with Louis being thus removed, for some time the two sisters shared their revolting empire over him. Madame de Mailly, however, soon retired from the field; but her withdrawal was a source not of triumph but of discomfiture to the marchioness. She was in her turn supplanted by a third sister, the Duchess de Lauraguais, who, as she was inferior to her elder sister in beauty and to the second in intellectual attractions, presented, probably, no other charm but that of novelty; and within a year or two the duchess was superseded by the youngest of her family, the Marchioness de la Tournelle. She and the fourth sister, the Marchioness de Flavacour, were reckoned the most beautiful of all the French nobility, but Madame de Flavacour was attached to her own husband, and did not disguise her dissatisfaction with the unprecedented shamelessness of her elder sisters. Madame de Tournelle, on the contrary, only so far disapproved of their example as to resolve that she would not share the empire she intended to acquire with either of them; that she would reign not only supreme but alone. Though hardly twenty-five years of age she was a widow, and, in the judgment of the court, her deep mourning set off her style of beauty to the greatest advantage. Louis, the first moment that he beheld her, owned the superiority of her beauty, and she artfully inflamed his passion by parading a rival before his eyes, the Duke d'Aginois, who had already succeeded in consoling her for the

death of her husband. After a little stimulating coquetry the king was allowed to overcome her pretended preference for the duke, by the present of the estate of Châteauroux, producing an annual income of 80,000 livres, which at the same time he erected into a duchy. The new duchess failed to gain one of her objects, the dismissal of all her partners in the king's endearments. Madame de Vintimille had recently died in her confinement, but Madame de Lauraguais could not be got rid of. She was resolved to stay ; Louis was too much used to her to be willing to dismiss her, so Madame de Châteauroux was compelled to acquiesce. And now the second pair of sisters entertained the king together at almost nightly suppers, of which the licence was reported to surpass the worst orgies of the Regency. But in her other purpose the new favourite succeeded ; she engrossed the entire influence over her lover's conduct, and having, of all her predecessors as royal mistresses, proposed to herself the example of Agnes Sorel* as a model for her imitation, she did her best to rouse him so far to show himself worthy of his throne as to place himself at the head of his army, and to trust to his

* The celebrated mistress of Charles VII., who, according to the common story, successfully roused him to the exertions which led to the expulsion of the English from France, in the reign of our Henry VI. Francis I., in a well-known epigram, expressly gives her this credit :—

“Gentille Agnès, plus d'honneur tu mérites,
La cause étant de France recouvrer.”

And even the grave Sismondi, though he thinks the obligations of the country to her, on this score, overrated, yet admits that “Il faut bien qu'Agnès ait mérité de quelque manière la reconnaissance populaire qui s'est attachée à son nom.”—P. vi. c. 1. Hallam, however, disbelieves and, by a comparison of dates, certainly goes near to disprove the whole story.—“Middle Ages,” c. i. pt. 2, *note*.

own energies and not to the valour of his marshals for his warlike triumphs.

In these respects the ignoble crew of debauchée courtiers had triumphed over the influence of Fleury, who, to preserve any degree of authority with the king, was compelled often to shut his eyes to conduct which he could not approve : and who, as long as Madame de Mailly was the only mistress, may be pardoned for thinking intimacy with her less pernicious to the state, and even less degrading to the king, than slavery to the domineering rapacity of Verneuil or Montespan, or the shamelessness and corruption of Tencin and De Prie ; and who did not foresee that the day was not far distant when, going with the usual proclivity of vice from bad to worse, Louis would surrender himself to the dominion of women more wicked and base than the very worst whose names scandal had ever coupled with his predecessors. With his public policy those who had thus perverted the king did not attempt to interfere ; and Maurepas, the only one of the secretaries of state whom Louis regarded with any favour, being wholly addicted to amusement, acquiesced willingly in the supremacy of a minister who took all the trouble off his hands, while the great body of the people could not avoid seeing not only that the kingdom was increasing in the affluence both of its private and public resources, but that the knowledge of this fact greatly extended and raised its reputation abroad. Accordingly, in the different disputes which arose between foreign nations, the mediation of both France and Fleury was constantly and earnestly sought by both parties. Protestants as they were, the factions which had for some years agitated Geneva, listened to his arbitration, and composed their differences. He displayed his autho-

rity over even the head of his own church, by inducing the Pope to consent to the recognition of Don Carlos as king of Naples, which the Roman cabinet had hitherto steadily refused. Even the infidels respected his judgment, and the Peace of Belgrade between Turkey and the empire was in a great degree brought about by his intervention. Another instance of his interference is more remarkable from the marvellous events which, at the end of the century, were the fruit of the connexion between France and Corsica, of which the first seeds were sown during Fleury's ministry.

The Corsicans had lately revolted from their ancient masters, the Genoese. Though few in numbers, for the population of the whole island did not greatly exceed 120,000 persons of all ages, they were a fierce and restless people, keeping the Genoese in a state of perpetual apprehension by their factions and seditions, and being consequently ruled by them in a spirit of severe coercion, and often of intolerable oppression. After several outbreaks within a few years, one of which was put down with the aid of the Austrians, and was afterwards chastised by the Genoese with a bad faith as impolitic as their cruelty, the Corsicans in 1736 embarked in a revolt so formal and complete that they altogether threw off their allegiance to Genoa, and chose as their king Theodore Neuhof, a Westphalian baron; who, having gone through almost as many adventures and vicissitudes as Ripperda, now thought he saw an opening for a greater permanence of good fortune as an elected sovereign. The Genoese appealed to Fleury for assistance to quell this new insurrection; and, in spite of his general love of peace, the cardinal, from a belief that King Theodore was an instrument of the English Government, of which he was

beginning to be jealous, promised them the aid of a strong body of French troops, on the condition of a payment by Genoa of a sum of money which would more than cover the expense of the expedition. In performance of his promise, at the beginning of 1738 he sent a force of above 3000 men to the island, which, though the Corsicans maintained a fierce and protracted resistance, at last succeeded in crushing the insurrection, and expelling Theodore, with the native chiefs who had supported him; and as the emperor had a deeper interest than any sovereign of France in restoring tranquillity among all the neighbours of his Italian provinces, Fleury concluded a convention with the Viennese cabinet, by which they jointly drew up a constitution for Corsica, which the authorities of Genoa engaged to observe, and which was guaranteed by those who had framed it. It was soon disregarded by the Genoese; and the powers which had thus pledged themselves to its maintenance were too fully occupied in other quarters to resent its violation; but the influence in the island which the treaty had given France led eventually to her purchase of the sovereignty of the island with the consent of the native nobles, and to the adoption of the greatest of its sons, Napoleon Buonaparte, as a born subject and citizen of France.

We have said that Fleury's constant and invariable object was peace; but the formal finishing stroke had hardly been put to the Treaty of Vienna, when he began to doubt whether it would be possible for him any longer to maintain it. In spite of all Walpole's ability and all his firmness, England, in the autumn of 1739, was driven by faction into a war with Spain, to avenge the wrongs of the captain of a merchantman, whose very appearance testified that he had never

suffered the injuries which he declared had been inflicted on him.* And Fleury, who had not been so anxious even to maintain his friendship with England as to cement the alliance with Spain, began to contemplate uniting the arms of France with those of that kingdom in an endeavour to restore the Pretender. He admitted some Jacobite noblemen from Scotland to an audience, and sent a secret emissary to England to collect information and form a judgment on the probability of the success of such an enterprise; and when the Marquis de Clermont, the nobleman employed on this mission, had brought back a favorable report of the resolution and resources of the Highland chieftains, Fleury engaged, on certain conditions, to transport the Irish Brigade in the French service to the Scottish coast, and to endeavour to procure the co-operation of another force from Spain. The conditions, however, which chiefly required some proof of the power of the Jacobite leaders to perform the promises of which they were lavish, proved too hard to be fulfilled, and some years had still to elapse before France committed itself to any other assistance of an invasion of England; but Fleury had so thoroughly made up his mind to sever the ties that had bound the two nations together from the commencement of the reign, that, when it was known that an expedition from England had crossed the Atlantic to attack Car-

* As is well known, the story which inflamed the House of Commons to a vote which practically amounted to one for instant war, was that told by Captain Jenkins, of a Spanish officer having torn off his ear. But Horace Walpole quotes a speech made in the House of Commons in 1761, by a Mr. Harvey, in which he asserted that Jenkins "died with his ears on his head." And Burke, who has recorded the confession on the part of the chief instigators of the Spanish war, of their wanton folly, evidently was of the same opinion as Mr. Harvey, since he speaks (Letter I. on a Regicide Peace) of "the fable of Captain Jenkins's ears."

thagena, he sent orders to the Marquis d'Antin, the French Admiral on that station, to combine with the Spaniards against the British fleet if any opportunity should present itself.*

But the mismanagement and consequent failure of Admiral Vernon saved the Spaniards from requiring the assistance of D'Antin, and the war for which Fleury was thus preparing broke out in an opposite and unexpected quarter. In the summer and autumn of 1740 Frederic William of Prussia and the Emperor Charles VI. both died. The King of Prussia was succeeded by his son, whom we have seen co-operating with the Austrians against the French six years before, but who was now about to prove their deadliest and most persevering enemy; though so little had the great Austrian commander foreseen such a revolution in German politics, that he had strongly recommended Frederic William to continue his attention to economy and to the increase of his army, that Prussia and Austria together might be a barrier to the future encroachments of France.† But though he had also urged upon his own master a similar course of policy, on the ground that the only trustworthy guarantee for the Pragmatic Sanction was an army of 200,000 men, Charles had paid less attention to his advice than the Prussian monarch. He left only 10,000*l.* in his treasury, and, besides the necessary military establishment of Italy and the Netherlands, scarcely 30,000 soldiers available for service in Germany;‡ and his

* Lord Mahon, iii. 95, c. 22, *note*.

† "Mémoires du Prince Eugène," p. 162.

‡ Coxe's "House of Austria," c. 97.—Lacretelle, in a note in Book vii. (vol. ii. p. 218), sums up the resources or the weakness of Austria in a statement that she had not altogether 100,000 effective troops, and that her revenue of 60 millions (about £2,400,000) was greatly embarrassed by debt.

daughter had to rue his supineness when on his death she found herself on one side exposed to all the anxieties and dangers of a disputed succession, and on the other to a still more unexpected invasion. The Elector of Bavaria, founding his pretensions on a statement of the contents of the will of Ferdinand I., which the late emperor by almost his only act of foresight had beforehand demonstrated to be false,* claimed Austria and Bohemia, in short all her dominions except Hungary, and offered himself as a candidate for the empire; and the new King of Prussia, putting forth a claim to Silesia which was equally unfounded and still more dishonest, since it had been formally abandoned by his grandfather, the Great Elector, invaded that province without giving the least notification of his intentions till his army had crossed the frontier. Maria Teresa at once sought the assistance of England, which readily granted her a considerable subsidy, and, after a time, decided on sending an army to her assistance. And in the existing state of feeling of the French Government that circumstance alone was sufficient to incline it to take the other side. Frederic indeed, when quitting Berlin to take the command of his army, remembering the long-standing antipathy of all French statesmen to the House of Austria, had asserted his reliance on the goodwill at least, if not the active co-operation, of France. "I am going, I imagine," said he to the Marquis de Beauveau, the French ambassador, "to play your game; if I throw doublets we will divide the winnings;"† and though it is not very clear what

* "He had sent a copy of a portion of Ferdinand's will to the different princes who guaranteed the Pragmatic Sanction."—Coxe, c. 97.

† "Siècle de Louis XV.," c. 6. Voltaire was at Berlin at the time.

portion of the prey Fleury expected to fall to the share of his sovereign, he nevertheless showed a desire to obtain what he could, by declaring that the French guarantee of the Pragmatic Sanction had been invalidated by the failure of the late emperor to perform some of the conditions on which it had been procured.

He had lately taken into his intimate confidence two grandsons of the unfortunate financier Fouquet, known as the Comte and Chevalier de Belleisle. The elder brother had always been one of his favourites, and, believing his own assertion that he had great military talents, he had in the former war given him the independent command of a division which properly belonged to the army which Berwick led against Philipsburg, and had subsequently made him commander-in-chief of the army of the Moselle, where, however, he effected nothing. But Belleisle's failure then to distinguish himself had not abated his eagerness for war, and, having obtained the ear of the king as well as that of the minister, he now urged Louis to espouse the cause of the Bavarian prince, as the best means of crushing for ever the House of Austria, an undertaking which every French king and statesman since Henry IV. had constantly regarded as the great aim of French policy. A ruler of sober judgment would have seen that France had never greater need of peace than at that moment; for the summer of 1740 had been one of unusual inclemency, and had so injured the harvest as to produce almost universal scarcity and distress. But this consideration, important as it was, was overlooked, and Belleisle, who fancied that he had a genius for diplomacy as well as for war, was sent as ambassador, first to Frederic, with whom he signed a treaty by which

France guaranteed to the king the possession of Silesia, which he had already completely subjugated, and afterwards to Frankfort, where the Diet of the Empire was assembled for the election of a new emperor. The competitors were the Prince of Bavaria and Francis of Lorraine, Duke of Tuscany, the husband of Maria Teresa; and Belleisle's instructions were to throw the influence of France into the scale in favour of the Bavarian, and then to conclude a treaty with him. The treaty was concluded even before the election, as was likely when the party the most eager for it was the one who was to make all the exertions and to bear all the expense. It was agreed that France should furnish the Elector with a subsidy and an army; and, that there might be no such disagreements now as forty years before had impeded the operations of his ancestor and Tallard, Louis sent him letters-patent creating him lieutenant-general of all his forces in Germany. It was not till February 1742 that the Elector, having secured the unanimous support of all his brother electors who were present, received the Imperial crown at Frankfort-on-Maine; but France had already fulfilled her treaty with him by sending two armies across the Rhine, one under a new marshal, the Marquis de Maillebois, the other under De Broglie and Belleisle. Both were at first very successful. De Maillebois marched into Westphalia, and by threatening Hanover terrified George II. into concluding a treaty of neutrality for that Electorate, and promising his electoral vote to the Prince of Bavaria, even at the moment when he was preparing to support the Queen of Hungary, his competitor's wife, with an English army; and De Broglie, at the head of 35,000 men, reached the Danube without resistance, made himself master of Lintz, and was preparing to

attack Vienna, which was wholly without means of defence, when his progress was arrested by fresh orders from Paris, which enjoined him to move into Bohemia, and to detach the Count de Saxe with the flower of the army against Prague. Fleury had no inclination to render the army too independent, and though Saxe saw and urged great objections to leaving the line of the Danube, he adhered to his new plan. In October Saxe invested the Bohemian capital on all sides, but he had hardly commenced active operations against it before he learnt that he was caught, as it were, in a trap; hemmed in by enemies on all sides, and that the instant reduction of the city was indispensable, not for his glory but for his safety.

On the approach of the French army Maria Teresa had quitted Vienna, and had retired to Presburg, where she summoned the States of Hungary to meet her in September. Historians of every country have commemorated the most interesting and romantic scene of modern times, when the noble queen, interesting from her personal beauty and grace, from the state of her health (she was on the point of her confinement with her first-born son), from the deep mourning which she still wore for her father, above all from the dangers which surrounded her, and the undaunted courage which she was opposing to them, threw herself on the States of Hungary for the means with which to protect her own and their rights, and to confront her enemies. "Not only her own person," she declared, with that simple plainness which in great emergencies is the truest eloquence, "and her crown, and her children's rights, but the independence of Hungary itself was at stake. She was deserted by all else, but she relied with confidence on the loyalty and might of her illustrious States, and

the hereditary valour of the Hungarian people.”* The age of chivalry was not yet past, and in no country was its spirit more lively than in that old-fashioned kingdom. To such an appeal nobles and burghers alike felt that there was but one answer; all laid their hands on their swords, and as they half drew them from their scabbards shouted with one unanimous acclamation, “We will die for our sovereign, for Maria Teresa.” And in every part of the kingdom, even in its most remote and least known extremities, they began to raise troops for her service. Croats, Pandours, Slaves, motley and wild-looking but indefatigable and intrepid bands of warriors, strangely dressed and strangely but effectively armed, flocked to her standard, and soon raised her army to a formidable number; and at the same time a well-conducted negotiation weakened her enemies in the very quarter in which they could least have expected a falling off. The King of Prussia, who openly scoffed at honour and magnanimity, and at the idea of being guided by any consideration but that of his personal interest,† having gained all that he desired, began, as is the wont of such selfish and unprincipled politicians, to feel jealous of his allies. The Elector of Bavaria might easily become too powerful; if Prague should fall he would probably be declared King of Bohemia, and might claim Silesia as a province belonging to that kingdom. Moreover, Frederic’s imperious tem-

* “*Agitur de regno Hungariæ, de personâ nostrâ, prolibus nostris et coronâ. Ab omnibus derelicti, unice ad inclytorum statuum fidelitatem, arma, et Hungarorum priscam virtutem confugimus.*”—Coxe affirms that these were the very words, which he copied from the national archives.—“House of Austria,” c. 101.

† “Don’t talk to me of magnanimity,” said he to Lord Hyndford; “a prince ought to regard nothing but his interest.”—Dover’s “Life of Frederic,” i. 91.

per was irritated by the self-sufficiency and arrogance of De Broglie and Belleisle, who joined the army as soon as the result of the election at Frankfort was ascertained. They disregarded his advice ;* Belleisle sometimes even taking on himself to give him lessons on military operations. And he believed that he had also reason for suspecting the sincerity of their court, and that Fleury, who, as he was informed, kept an emissary constantly at Vienna, would not scruple at any time to make peace at his expense. He resolved to be beforehand with him. The English ambassador at Berlin, Lord Hyndford, willingly lent his good offices to reconcile him to the queen, and before the end of October an armistice between Austria and Prussia was entered into, which left Maria Teresa at liberty to turn her arms against her other enemies.

She could not save Prague. The fortifications of that city were decayed in many places ; had they been in ever so good a condition, they were too extensive for the garrison, which did not exceed 3000 men ; and Saxe, who knew that an army stronger than his own was hastening to relieve it, saw the necessity of making himself master of it before his enemies could arrive to hem him in between their camp and its walls. He determined to carry it by assault ; and the French historians have honourably commemorated an officer named Chevert, who afterwards made himself a high reputation as the real victor of Hastenbeck, and who on this occasion gave an earnest of the intrepid skill to which that success was owing. Saxe had discerned his talents, and, though he was but a lieutenant-colonel, had entrusted him with the lead of the attack on one side of the city, while he himself headed his men on

* See Frederic's own "Memoirs," c. vi.

another. Chevert called a single grenadier, on whose steadiness he could rely. "You see," said he, "that sentinel on the walls?" "Certainly, colonel." "Climb up, and he will summon you; make no reply, but advance towards him." "Certainly, colonel." "He will fire at you, and miss you." "Certainly, colonel." "Rush on and kill him, and I will be at hand to support you." Everything happened just as he had foreseen; the sentinel summoned the adventurous grenadier; missed him; was killed by him; Chevert and his men swarmed up the rampart, and before the rest of the guard, attracted by the report of the sentinel's musket, could come up, they had obtained a footing within the city. They forced the nearest gate to admit their comrades, and the city was won on that side. Saxe was equally successful at his point of attack, and, with a loss which did not amount to fifty men, the army had secured safe winter quarters, where, in the course of the next few weeks, De Broglie and Belleisle arrived with the remainder of their forces.

But this success, which in the end was found to be dearly purchased, was the only one which attended the French arms, and almost while it was being achieved, Saxe's warnings of the impolicy of quitting the line of the Danube were verified. Lintz was so important a city as the capital of Upper Austria, that Count Ségur was left behind with 10,000 men to hold it and the surrounding district; and before the end of the year Marshal Kevenhuller came down upon him with thrice his numbers,* and compelled him and his whole

* The discrepancy between the French and German accounts of the numbers engaged, which I have had occasion to point out before, is especially remarkable here, being, as before, in exactly the opposite direction from that which might have been expected. Since

force to surrender. Then, making himself master of the passes into Bavaria, he pushed on against the capital, and on the very day on which the Elector was raised to the empire, Munich was lost to him and opened its gates to the Austrian conqueror. Equal disasters were preparing for the division in Bohemia. Prince Charles of Lorraine, the brother of Maria Teresa's husband, and himself married to her sister, had been marching with 35,000 men to save Prague, when he received intelligence of its surrender. He contented himself for some time with taking up a position which enabled him to check the further progress of the French; till in the beginning of the spring his operations against them were disagreeably interrupted by Frederic's breaking off the armistice of the preceding year, and resuming hostilities. As soon as Saxe had taken Prague, the Elector of Bavaria had repaired to that city, and had been acknowledged and crowned as King of Bohemia. And Frederic, never satisfied as long as anything remained to be acquired, purchased the city and county of Glatz of him for 400,000 crowns, and, as it was occupied by an Austrian garrison, renewed the war and laid siege to it. He encountered a vigorous resistance, but at last compelled it to surrender, while Marshal Schwein, the most trusted of his officers, took Olmutz. In March, in the hope of relieving his French allies in Prague, he moved his army down to the southernmost districts of Bohemia, pushing forward some of his cavalry almost within sight of Vienna. To save that all-important city Prince Charles was forced to break up his cantonments in Bohemia: he pursued and came up

Austrian army 15,000 men; Coxe, speaking from Austrian records, puts it at 30,000; Lacretelle raises Ségur's whole force to 18,000 men, but reduces the number who surrendered to 6000.

with him, and after much marching and countermarching in the middle of May the two armies fought a well-contested battle at Chotusitz, a village a few miles to the south-east of Prague, in which though the Prussians remained masters of the field, it was almost the only advantage they reaped from the conflict, since they lost not only almost as many killed and wounded, but as many prisoners also as their enemies. Indeed, how little it was really in favour of Frederic may be inferred from the fact that he immediately renewed his proposals for peace, and in June, 1742, less than a month after the battle, concluded a definite treaty on terms which were more favorable to Maria Teresa than those on which he had previously insisted.

He justified himself in a curious letter which he wrote to Fleury,* extolling the efforts which he had made for the common cause, blaming the faithlessness of his Saxon allies, the obstinacy and incapacity of De Broglie, and drawing a terrible picture of the defenceless state of his own dominions if he should continue to make war at such a distance from his frontiers; and Fleury in a brief reply admitted the misfortunes that had been sustained, and, deploring the inevitable loss of Prague, besought Frederic's mediation with Austria, undertaking to send Belleisle full powers to agree to any conditions which the king might procure. Even a less pacific statesman might well have felt the same anxiety to terminate the war; for the unskillfulness and presumption of the two marshals had brought them into a situation of such difficulty that, without heavy loss, it was impossible for them to extricate themselves. Yet they had achieved one success which

* The letter is given at full length in Chap. 7 of his Memoirs. Fleury's reply.

might have proved important if they had known how to use it; for while Frederic, after the battle of Chotusitz, was treating for peace, Prince Lobkowitz, one of the Austrian generals, had crossed the Moldau with his single division of 7000 men, and laid siege to Frauenberg. And Broglie and Belleisle, having received a powerful reinforcement of 10,000 men from France, marched to save the beleaguered town. It was not a difficult task, for the force which they took with them was far stronger than that which they attacked, and though Lobkowitz endeavoured to arrest their advance by occupying a narrow defile near Salcé, his battalions were overpowered, and having sustained a loss, including prisoners, of above 1000 men, he was compelled to fall back and raise the siege.

Such a repulse of an inferior enemy, though useful, was no very remarkable exploit; but it sufficed wholly to turn the heads of the marshals who had achieved it. They began, too, to quarrel with one another as to the next operation to be undertaken, agreeing in nothing but in extolling their own conduct and valour in achieving their late victory; and in despising the warning of Frederic, that Lobkowitz would soon attempt and be in a condition to turn the tables on them, and that no time was to be lost in victualling Frauenberg and rejoining the main body of their army. They remained careless and inactive under its walls, and the king's prediction was fulfilled sooner than he had expected. In less than a fortnight, Lobkowitz, having procured the aid of another division, retraced his steps and fell upon De Broglie, who, as Belleisle had returned to Prague, had only his own division with him. The marshal, though taken unawares, behaved with great intrepidity, and even with some skill; but his force was utterly routed, lost all

its baggage, and was driven in disorder, fleeing before the pursuing Austrians, to the very walls of Prague. Here he reunited himself to Belleisle ; but his condition was now almost hopeless. Soon Charles of Lorraine, who, drawing men from all the southern and eastern provinces of the empire, had collected an army of more than 60,000 men, reached the neighbourhood of the city, and showed a resolution to prevent his retreat. The citizens were, to a man, faithful to their ancient rulers, did their utmost to prevent the French from receiving supplies, and traversed and sent intelligence to the prince of all their plans. The marshals were summoned to surrender ; they disdained to yield, but killed the horses of the cavalry for food, and pulled down hundreds of houses to find wood for fires. For some time they trusted to the hope that Marshal Maillebois, who, as they knew, had received orders to join them from Westphalia, might arrive in time to relieve them ; but he came not, and they presently learnt that Fleury, having suffered himself to be amused by some proposals of peace which were probably only designed to make him relax his efforts for their succour, had countermanded his orders, which indeed the earliness of a Bohemian winter would probably have prevented him from performing. Prince Charles, however, did not blockade Prague. He had no desire to drive the French to despair while still within it, or to be forced to storm a city where the people were his friends, and were prepared and anxious to renew their allegiance to his sister-in-law and queen. He therefore preferred that they should escape, and trusted for their ruin to the damage which he might inflict on them in a pursuit : and his plans succeeded to his wish. At the beginning of December, 1742, De Broglie, with a small division, quitted Prague, and

took his way towards Bavaria; and in the middle of the month, Belleisle, leaving behind 4000 invalids under Chevert, set forth with the remainder, reduced to 14,000 men, to return to France through Franconia. Few retreating armies have suffered greater hardships. Their provisions were scanty; the cold was intense; their tents, their sole shelter at night, few and bad. Numbers died of starvation; numbers fell, worn out with fatigue or crippled with frost bites, and rose no more. And the enemy, revengeful, merciless, and unwearied, hung on their rear and flanks, picking up every straggler, and harassing the whole body with ceaseless attacks. Belleisle, who, in spite of his boastful temper, was really a man of undaunted resolution, in these terrible circumstances displayed more skill than it had been previously supposed that he possessed. Two main roads led from Prague to the western frontier of Bohemia; but, as he learnt that on these the Austrians had broken down all the bridges, he selected for his line of retreat a narrow cross road which lay between the two, and which they had neglected, from their opinion of its impracticability for the march of an army.* He kept his men well together. Making the rear his own post, he repulsed many an attack: vigilantly reconnoitring each side of the road as he advanced, he avoided many an ambuscade, and many a defile in which the Austrian troops, relying on their better knowledge of the country, had reckoned on intercepting them. And at last he reached Egra. Leaving in that small but commanding

* "Je lui ai caché le chemin que j'avais résolu de prendre: car il avait fait couper tous les défilés et rompre tous les ponts qui se trouvent sur les deux grands chemins qui conduisent de Prague à Egra. J'en ai pris un entre les deux autres," &c.—Letter from Belleisle to Seckendorf, quoted by Lacretelle, ii. 250.

town a garrison to check further pursuit, he pushed on to the Rhine, and early in 1743 reached France without further molestation. But all his care and all his personal valour had been unable to save his division from the loss of half of its number. The only officer who came off with credit from the Bohemian campaign was Chevert. Debilitated as the force under his command was by wounds and sickness, and cut off from all hope of succour, he disdained to surrender: and in reply to a summons from Prince Lobkowitz, declared that he would rather burn Prague and bury himself and his comrades under the ruins. He offered to evacuate the city on condition of being allowed to march out with all the honours of war, to return to France. And to save the capital of the kingdom the prince was forced to grant the terms which he demanded. With drums beating and colours flying the undaunted commander quitted Prague for Egra; but his troops were unequal to the fatigues and hardships of the march, and by far the greater part of them perished by the way. Of the whole army which De Broglie and Belleisle had led into Bohemia, and which, including the reinforcements which subsequently joined it, had numbered above 50,000 fine troops, the most sanguine estimate did not compute that more than 12,000 ever regained their country.

When it returned it found France under a new government. In the first month of 1743 Fleury died at the age of ninety. It was only within the last few months that he had begun to feel any of the weakness or inconveniences of old age; till that time he had loved to flatter himself that he should be allowed to complete a hundred years; and the surest way to his favour was to bring him accounts of people who had reached that patriarchal term of life, which he was sure to re-

ceive greedily and without scrutiny. His servants also took care to keep from his notice whatever might remind him of his mortality ; carrying their precautions to such an inhuman pitch, that when the Secretary for War, the Marquis de Breteuil, was struck down with apoplexy in his antichamber at Issy, they refused to call in medical aid, and the sufferer died untended in his carriage on the road back to Paris. But during the latter part of the preceding year the cares of office, which while peace lasted he had been able to parry, had been brought upon him with overwhelming pressure by the war. And the failure of his efforts to re-establish peace had involved him in additional mortification. He had been impolitic enough to express his anxiety on the subject in a letter to the Austrian general Konigsegg, in which he threw all the blame of having commenced the war on Belleisle, by whom, as he said truly enough, the king had been chiefly persuaded to engage in it ; and the Austrian ministers, to whom Konigsegg forwarded the letter, published it in their Gazette ; treating in the same manner a second letter in which he spoke slightly of the regard for good faith shown by Frederic of Prussia. That sovereign's rupture of the alliance by making a separate treaty, and the probability that the emperor, whose native dominions of Bavaria were almost wholly in the grasp of Austria, would be forced to follow his example, added to his uneasiness, and filled him with nervous apprehensions that France would soon find herself completely isolated, and compelled for the future to bear the whole weight of the war. The difficulty of extricating the army in Prague added to his anxieties, and he had no longer strength to bear up against them. Louis laid aside some of his habitual apathy on hearing of his condition, and paid his dying tutor

more than one visit in his sick-room ; but even royal condescension could not revive the old man, who passed away painlessly and tranquilly on the 29th of January, 1743.

No minister had ever had so long a tenure of undisturbed power. In none had the country been relieved of so many burdens, or made such advances in prosperity ; yet so little credit is given to the unobtrusive virtues of order, economy and peacefulness, which is the foundation of all real prosperity, that Fleury's name has seldom been mentioned among the ministers of whom or to whom France has cause to be proud or thankful. His English contemporary, Walpole, has met a nearly similar fate. Historians who have been loud in their praise of Chatham's genius, or Fox's eloquence, pass over with neglect, often with something like contempt, the plain good sense of Walpole ; to which indeed the country owes no warlike triumphs, but to which she is very mainly indebted for the secure establishment of the present dynasty, and for laying the foundation of that great general prosperity of the nation which has never been checked since his time, but has enabled it to bear the enormous burdens caused by the wars embarked in by his successors.* To the English statesman the present age is beginning to do the justice, as one of the rulers who have most contributed to the welfare of his country, which in his own time, or in the generation next to his own, was granted to him by few ; and though, while making every allowance for the great age which he had attained before he first took upon himself the cares of state, we may admit that Fleury had a less vigorous and

* See for an admirable character of Walpole, Burke's "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs."

manly mind than his British contemporary, yet we may fairly think him entitled to a niche but a little lower in the temple of fame, if we remember not only how he kept a warlike nation at peace, and restored economy and propriety to the most extravagant and profligate of courts, but also how, in an age of personal corruption without example he kept his personal integrity unsullied, and, dying poor after eighteen years of absolute authority over the revenues of the kingdom, presented an example of disinterested probity, which he had not been able to copy from his predecessors, and of which he found no imitator among those who succeeded him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THOUGH disappointed in his hopes of a more protracted longevity, Fleury was in reality as fortunate in his death as he had been in all the circumstances of his life. If he had in his lifetime failed to gain all credit which he really deserved, he was at least free from the imputation of having brought on his country a single disaster, for even the ruin of the army in Bohemia was not completed at his death. But had he remained longer at the helm, he might have been unable to maintain that boast, for the war which he left behind him was rapidly assuming an importance which required a more vigorous hand. Britain was preparing to mingle in the contest with great force, not, indeed, as yet as a principal, nor as avowedly at war with France on her own account; but her power was too great for her long either to be contented with or to be allowed to play only a secondary part: and besides the weight which she would throw into the scale by land, her absolute mastery of the sea made her friendship or enmity of especial importance to the nation which, though inferior to her, was yet inferior only to her on that element. Holland, which the King of Prussia said waited on England like a tender on a ship of the line, was sure to follow her lead, as were many of the inferior German powers, while it would be difficult for France to obtain the aid of a single serviceable ally.

Probably no one really felt Fleury's loss so severely as Louis himself. His was not, indeed, a disposition susceptible of the genuine sorrow of affection, but he was keenly alive to vexations and annoyances; and his sense of the inconvenience caused to him by the departure of one who had hitherto taken all trouble off his hands was only sharpened by the declaration which, in imitation of his great-grandfather's conduct on the death of Mazarin, he thought it becoming to make, that he intended henceforth to be his own prime minister. He did not, indeed, follow his predecessor's example in attempting really to carry out this profession, but even the reference necessarily made to him from time to time by those to whom he resigned the real power was irksome to him; nor, as he was not deficient in intelligence, could he fail to be conscious that the effect of his assertion of a personal superintendence of all the different departments of the state was to make the people in general (while giving to the ministers who remained in office the credit of any success that was achieved) look on him as responsible for all the disasters of the state, and for all their own distresses.

But he was at no time solicitous for the esteem or even for the goodwill of any one with whom he was not brought into daily contact. His sole object through life was to save himself from any trouble which might interfere with his unrestrained indulgence in pleasure. Even when, as happened a year or two afterwards, he went to the seat of war and was present on the field of battle, he did so only because he was overborne by the stronger will of his mistress, which he could not exert himself to resist; and, during the two years which followed the death of Fleury, Madame de

Châteauroux was the real ruler, not only of the king, but also of the state. It must be admitted that she used her power well ; and she not only gave him good advice, and prompted him to a becoming course of action herself, but she was also free from jealousy, and selected and supported as ministers only men of ability and public virtue. Orry, the superintendent of finance, had nearly fallen into disgrace with the cardinal, as being in his opinion too much inclined to encourage expenditure on warlike preparations ; and he had at all times been unpopular with the profligate courtiers, who had nicknamed him the Bull from the resistance his sturdy honesty opposed to their rapacity. But he was a man of vigorous capacity, and a correct judgment of the national interest ; and the duchess maintained him steadily in his post, and encouraged him in his resolution to place large funds at the disposal of the war minister. The secretary for war was the Count d'Argenson, whose elder brother, the Marquis d'Argenson, before the end of the year became secretary for foreign affairs ; these also were men of talent, energy, and patriotism, and, like Orry, were hated and sneered at by Richelieu and his party. But the influence of Madame de Châteauroux was greater than that of the duke, and with her aid the count applied himself diligently to improving the condition of the navy, as the arm which would be of the greatest importance in the event of a war with England, which was evidently imminent, if not unavoidable. There was one more among the nobles of the court who, though not invested with any official responsibility, constantly gave Louis honorable advice, and sought to stimulate him to worthy actions, the veteran marshal the Duke de Noailles ;

and his friendship, too, was sought by the mistress for the sake of his co-operation with her efforts to elevate the character of her royal lover.

The war was rapidly assuming a more unfavourable aspect. The two marshals De Broglie and Belleisle were quarrelling violently with each other on the degree in which either was to be looked on as accountable for the great disasters which had befallen the army in Bohemia, and both had entirely lost the confidence of the troops; while it was generally understood that the King of England himself was preparing to take the command of the allied army which was intended to operate on the Rhine in the ensuing campaign. This expectation was speedily verified. In the summer of 1742 a fine body of 16,000 British troops had been sent to the Netherlands under the command of Lord Stair, whose services had previously been only of a diplomatic and peaceful character, and, at the beginning of the spring of 1743, though no declaration of war had as yet been exchanged between France and England, Stair led them up the Rhine to Mayence; and having been joined on his march by an equal number of Hanoverians, with some regiments from Hesse, and by an Austrian division under the Duke d'Aremberg, moved up and down the Maine for some weeks without, apparently, any settled purpose except that of awaiting some further reinforcements before actively opening the campaign. But the French were not disposed to give him time to receive them; the Duke de Noailles had been sent from Paris to take the command of the army, and though he was as old as the British general, he was not equally destitute of military experience. In the War of the Succession he had served with credit in Spain, and, since that time, he

had shown both vigour and capacity in his efforts to reorganize the army in Piedmont in the war of 1735. His army consisted of 60,000 men, and with so decided a superiority he was able to assume the initiative, and to choose his own time for action. King George, having prorogued his parliament towards the end of April, had at once crossed over to Hanover, and in the middle of June reached Stair's head-quarters. He found the army in a position of the greatest difficulty and danger, in and around the small town of Aschaffenburg on the Maine; in want of every kind of supplies; confronted and almost hemmed in by the French, who were only separated from him by the river; scarcely daring to move from Aschaffenburg, and wholly unable to remain there more than a day or two if the troops would avoid actual starvation for themselves and their horses. The whole amount of the combined force did not exceed 38,000 men; but presently intelligence arrived that two more divisions of Hanoverians and Hessians, numbering 12,000 men, were approaching Hanau, an important town eighteen miles lower down the river, and Stair, with the consent of the king, resolved on retracing his steps to meet them.

Hitherto he had hardly realized the full peril of his situation; but the result of his first movements revealed it to the least instructed trooper in his army. His march lay along a narrow valley on the right bank of the Maine, and between that river and a range of thickly-wooded and almost impassable hills; while near the middle of the valley lay the village of Dettingen, having in its front a brook whose banks were so steep as to give it the character of a ravine. On the left bank of the Maine, Noailles had constructed some heavy masked batteries, commanding the ground in front of

Dettingen ; and between that village and Selingenstadt, a few miles lower down, he had also thrown two bridges over the river ; so that he was completely master of both banks. The last man of the allies had hardly quitted Aschaffenburg before he detached one division of 12,000 men to occupy that town ; and, pressing on with the main body, sent another detachment, under his own nephew, the Duke de Grammont, across the bridges to seize on Dettingen, and thus hem the enemy in on all sides. It seemed that nothing could save the whole allied army, and even the king himself, from capture. But, unfortunately for Noailles, the skill of whose previous arrangements deserved a better fortune, Grammont was too much impressed with the greatness of the advantages thus gained, to remember that prudence and patience were still needed to secure them. He numbered one marshal of brilliant fame among his ancestors, and he was eager to earn a truncheon for himself by gaining the victory which seemed prepared for him by his own prowess. Instead, therefore, of waiting till the allies, who had no choice but either to advance or to surrender, reached the ravine, the attempt to cross which must inevitably have thrown them into some disorder, he crossed it himself at the head of his division, and thus set his own foot within the toils which his uncle had spread for the enemy. He now had to fight with the ravine at his back ; his single division was greatly inferior to the entire force of the allies which he had attacked, while the batteries on the other side of the Maine, which had been intended to play on the rear of the enemy, were rendered useless by his advance to the ground which the guns commanded. As soon as he saw the blunder which Grammont had thus made, Noailles hastened to cross

the river to take the command, and to repair it ; but he was already too late. The moment that his men were formed on the southern side of the ravine, Grammont had led them to the charge. The Duke d'Harcourt, who commanded the household brigade, and who was equally eager for the marshal's staff, had rushed forward with the same inconsiderate valour ; but they had encountered a courage as fiery and more unyielding than their own. Their charge was withstood, repelled, and presently retaliated. A curious accident had nearly put a prize in their hands such as had never fallen to a French army before, and which would have more than counterbalanced any disaster. The King of England's charger, which was but imperfectly trained, took fright at the roar of the artillery, ran away with his rider towards the enemy, and nearly carried him in among their ranks ; but when he had approached near enough to them for the king's features to be recognised, he was overtaken and stopped by an aide-de-camp ; and the warlike monarch, when he got back to his army, resolving not again to incur such danger, dismounted, and for the rest of the day fought on foot at the head of his men. The Duke of Cumberland, his son, showed equal resolution, refusing to quit the field though severely wounded ; and every regiment, inspired by their example, and aware of the superiority of the enemy, fought as if it rested with itself to neutralize that superiority by extraordinary exertions. Only for a short moment was the victory in doubt. The household brigade, still, as in the time of the last Louis, distinguished for the noble blood and dauntless spirit of its members, had pierced the cavalry opposed to them, and thrown it into confusion ; but the British infantry closed up, and gave the broken squadrons time to rally ; while the French infantry failed to

meet the Austrian horse with equal steadiness, but had more than one regiment routed with heavy loss. All that personal bravery could do to repair the damage caused by his unskilfulness, was done by Grammont; he was nobly seconded by his staff, of whom an unusual number were killed or severely wounded. The Marquis de Puysegur with his own hand shot some of the soldiers of his regiment who refused to return to the charge, and were spreading their unmanly panic among their comrades; and it is recorded that one little boy, ten years of age, the Count de Boufflers, a worthy scion of a race of warriors, lost his leg by a cannon ball, and bore the necessary amputation, and died with an unshaken fortitude which would have become a veteran. After a fierce combat of four hours, Noailles prepared to draw off his men. Harcourt and his indomitable cavalry covered the retreat as well as they could; but they were unable to save the army from heavy loss; and when the last battalions had crossed the Maine, it was weaker by more than five thousand men than it had been when Grammont left his vantage ground in the morning. The loss of the allies was something less than half that number;* but as they pressed on their advance to Hanau without stopping, they were forced also to leave about six hundred of their wounded to become prisoners. Lord Stair sent a flag of truce to

* I quote the statement of Voltaire, for the sake of the honorable and well-deserved testimony which it bears to the uniform honesty of the British returns of the results of a battle:—"Il y eut du côté des alliés 2231 hommes tant tués que blessés. On sût ce calcul par les Anglais, qui rarement diminuent leurs pertes, et n'augmentent guère celle de leurs ennemis."—"Siècle de Louis XV.," c. 10. It would be ungracious to raise the question whether he intended his compliment to have additional force by suggesting a contrast between the accuracy which he praises, and the character of the reports of any other nation which he does not name.

Noailles, recommending them to his kindness, and the duke treated them with a chivalrous humanity. Nor was he without a rival in such conduct. The Duke of Cumberland showed equal consideration for his defeated enemies, at greater personal inconvenience to himself. A bullet had lodged in his leg, and after the battle a surgeon was preparing to extract it, when the prince saw a French officer named Girardeau, with a far severer wound, carried by his tent. "Go, first," said he to the surgeon, "to that French gentleman; he is worse hurt than I am, and may not find it so easy to get attendance presently, while I am sure of it."*

Stair was anxious to make the victory still more decisive by pursuing the French across the Maine; but the king, and D'Aremberg, the Austrian commander, who had been wounded, pointed out how large a proportion of the French army were still fresh, and resolved to content themselves with the advantage already gained. Stair then proposed to embark the army in boats, and send it down the Rhine to Flanders, from whence it might be possible even to march upon Paris, a design which, when compared with his blunders before the battle, seems to show that his strategical science was superior to his skill as a tactician. But this counsel too was overruled; while the vehemence with which he pressed it, gave such offence to his royal master that before the end of the campaign he was removed from his command. The Parisians, as was not unusual, consoled themselves for their defeat with jests. They named the day of battle the day of the broken truncheons,† because

* Voltaire, "Siècle de Louis XV.," c. 10.

† "Memoirs of Frederic the Great," c. 8.

Grammont and Harcourt were disappointed of the marshals' staves which they had hoped to win; they distinguished the officers who had been engaged, many of whom, finding the bridges blocked up by their retreating comrades, had sought to join the main body by swimming the river, as ducks of the Maine; and one anonymous and spiteful joker, wishing to impute to Noailles that his stay on the left bank of the Maine, while Grammont made his advance on the right bank, had been caused by cowardice, hung up over the gate of his hôtel in Paris a sword bearing the inscription, "Thou shalt do no murder."* But posterity has done him justice, and agrees that he had done all that skill could do to ensure a decisive and bloodless triumph, and that he was robbed of it by the inexperienced rashness of his subordinate officer.

After a time Noailles crossed the Rhine at Oppenheim, and fell back towards Landau; when finding that Charles of Lorraine was approaching the great river, apparently with the intention of crossing it at Bâle, and invading France at that point, he recommended the king to give a separate army to the Count de Saxe, and to entrust him with the defence of Alsace. The objection with which Louis rejected his counsel was the very last which the old duke could have expected, and affords as striking an instance of the extent to which religious superstition actuates even those who have utterly renounced all the principles and restraints of true religion, as any incident in history. The adulterous lover of the Duchess de Châteauroux and her three sisters, objected that Saxe was a Huguenot. It would have been more correct to say that he was not a Roman Catholic, for he was,

* "Homicide tu ne point seras."—"Memoirs of Frederic the Great," c. 8.—Lacretelle, ii. 275.

in reality, not much more trammelled in his practice by scruples of conscience than the king himself. But his religious professions, as far as they went, were not inspired by Catholic orthodoxy, and Louis therefore refused to avail himself of his indisputable talents for war. Saxe, however, could afford to bide his time. If he had ever had an equal in the French army, he had certainly had none since the days of Luxemburg; and it was not long before Louis found that he had no choice between that of trusting to his heretical subject's genius for victory, or of consoling himself for defeat by reflections on the purity of the doctrine held by those who brought it on his armies.

His refusal to employ Saxe now brought great misery on the provinces which were thus exposed to invasion. Prince Charles sent a division across the Rhine under General Mentzel, an officer of brilliant courage but of a ferocious character, who traversed Alsace and Lorraine, pillaging; destroying; and threatening the Lorrainers in particular with the penalties of rebellion if they resisted him; though in truth their former sovereign, the husband of Maria Teresa, had, as we have seen, exchanged that territory for Tuscany. And during the autumn and winter the fortunes and prospects of France presented little that was promising. Her enemies even increased in number; a very important addition to them being made by the accession of Sardinia to the alliance. After a long and difficult negotiation the English ministers had succeeded in reconciling that country to Austria; and a treaty was signed at Worms in September between George II., Maria Teresa, and Charles Emmanuel, by which the King of Sardinia, on receiving some considerable augmentations of territory, and renouncing some pretensions which were peculiarly offensive to

the queen, undertook to keep an army of 45,000 men on foot in Piedmont, which, when added to a promised Austrian contingent of 30,000 more, composed a force which would severely tax the resources of France to oppose it in that country. The singular part of the treaty was that both the continental powers were to receive a large yearly subsidy from England, or, in other words, were to be paid by her for fighting their own battle against France. But, though such a stipulation was but little creditable to the sagacity or patriotism of the English ministers, who in fact by agreeing to it were sacrificing the interests of their own country to the king's predilection for Hanover, it clearly made a restoration of peace more difficult by the strength of the inducement which it afforded the subsidized powers to continue the war.

Louis was now very nearly in the situation in which his predecessor had found himself at the beginning of the century, when France had to contend single-handed against a similar coalition. To increase the resemblance, in the month which followed the Treaty of Worms he made an offensive and defensive alliance with Spain, which, though it provided him with the assistance of a powerful fleet, yet, even in his own opinion, brought with it disadvantages of great importance, since it bound him to assist in the recovery of Gibraltar and Minorca from England, an object which, while this power continued mistress of the sea, he rightly judged to be impracticable.* He at the same time engaged to send an army of 25,000 men to co-operate with the Spanish troops in Piedmont, where

* Louis the next year told the Marquis d'Argenson that "C'était malgré lui qu'il avait signé le traité de Fontainebleau, qui l'engageait à des conquêtes impossibles."—"Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson," quoted by Sismondi.

it was almost inevitable that they would be eventually overpowered, as indeed they were; and, on the whole, however imposing in appearance, the alliance with Spain was undoubtedly a source of weakness and misfortune. It was an injury to France in another way also, by causing Louis in the spring of 1744 to issue a formal declaration of war against the King of England, who, being thus divested of the character of a mere auxiliary to the Queen of Hungary, which he had hitherto assuredly maintained, now put his fleets as well as his armies in motion. But the same season brought Louis a counterpoise to these disadvantages in the return of Frederic of Prussia to his former policy of hostility to Austria. So capricious and restless was that sovereign's character that the mere fact of his being at peace was sufficient to dispose him to engage in war for the sake of change; and, acting on this knowledge of his disposition, and of his desire to be looked on as a patron of science and literature, as well as a master of war, D'Argenson despatched Voltaire, as the most eminent literary man of the day, on a secret and informal mission to induce him to resume hostilities. Frederic, who never allowed his pedantry and affectation of learning to influence his political conduct, paid little regard to the arguments of an envoy who, having no credentials, might be disavowed at any moment: but he thought that the absence of Prince Charles with the principal Austrian army on the Rhine presented a favourable opportunity for attacking the queen and adding to his former conquests; and in May he concluded a treaty with France, the emperor, and one or two of the minor princes of the empire, and prepared for a second invasion of Bohemia.

More important than any accession of allies, had it

only been permanent, was the change which in 1744 seemed to have taken place in the character and conduct of Louis himself. His first act of hostility against England after his treaty with Spain had been one of ostentatious weakness, and, even had it been better supported, of doubtful wisdom. Indeed it was not undertaken from any considerations of state policy, but it had been instigated by Archbishop Tencin, whom Fleury, shortly before his death, had admitted to the council, and who ever since that event had cherished hopes of raising himself to the head of the Government as the acknowledged prime minister. Through the interest of the Stuarts he had lately obtained the Roman purple, and he conceived that if he could make James VII., as he was called on the continent, King of England, the increased interest of that prince would suffice to procure him the accomplishment of his wish. Louis did not divine his object, but was easily persuaded to adopt his views. He equipped a fleet and army to invade England in the interest of the Pretender, allowing that prince's eldest son, the celebrated Charles Edward, to accompany the expedition; and, perhaps because he thought the presence of a Protestant general might dispose some of the English malcontents to welcome him, giving Saxe the command of the army. But though the fleet under Admiral Roquefeuille numbered twenty-three sail of the line, it was met off Dungeness by Sir John Norris with a force so much more powerful that it had no resource but flight, and the sailors thought themselves fortunate in being able to reach Brest in safety. While the army, which had been embarked in transports at Dunkirk to cross as soon as Roquefeuille should have made himself master of the Channel, suffered severely from a gale that wrecked some of the

vessels while still in the harbour. The events of the next year proved that no enterprise undertaken with the object of restoring the Stuarts could ever have succeeded; but the attempt to re-establish a Catholic sovereign in England was so impolitic at a moment when France's chief hope on the continent lay in procuring allies among the Protestant princes of Germany, even Frederic of Prussia being nominally of that persuasion, that Chavigny, the ablest of the French diplomatists, in negotiating with them found it necessary to assure them privately that the expedition had been equipped with no expectation or even desire of success; but solely with the object of compelling King George to recall his English troops from the continent, and of thus facilitating the attack which was about to be made on the Austrian Netherlands. The only real result of the expedition was that it procured Saxe the marshal's staff, and thus gave him a claim to a principal command, which hitherto had never been conferred on him.

But when spring had brought back the season for active operations on the continent, Louis, to the astonishment of Europe and the delight of his own subjects, made an effort to throw off his former apathetic indolence, and quitting Paris in the first week of May, joined Noailles and Saxe, who with 80,000 men were preparing to open the campaign in the Netherlands. His doing so was the work of Madame de Châteauroux, who for a moment was rewarded with a general gratitude which was disposed to overlook the means by which she had acquired her influence in consideration of the way in which she exerted it; till by her presumptuous shamelessness she turned that kindly feeling into a condemnation more universal than before, and brought on herself undisguised contempt and

public mortification. The king brought with him to head-quarters a splendid staff of nobles, but no ladies. He had not even deigned to give an answer to a letter which Marie Leczinska had written to beg to be allowed to join him; and he had acquiesced in the advice of Maurepas, who had urged him not to offend the soldiers by taking his mistress among them after having refused them the honour of having the queen in their camp; and therefore the duchess also had been left in Paris. But this arrangement was not such as she had contemplated, and she was resolved to carry her point. There was no force in the Netherlands capable of resisting the French host in the open field, and the whole campaign was one of sieges, which Saxe covered with a division of 20,000 men, while Noailles, with the rest of the army, conducted the operations against the different towns. None were strong enough to hold out long. Courtrai was reduced in three days, Menin in a week, and then, leaving the conduct of the siege of Ypres to the Prince de Clermont, who, though an ecclesiastic and the Abbé of St. Germain, had obtained from the Pope a dispensation for military service, Louis himself with Noailles repaired to Lille, on the pretext of celebrating in its cathedral a *Te Deum* for his success, but in reality to meet his mistress. She had revenged herself on Maurepas by persuading Louis to despatch him on the affairs of his department to the southern ports; and having thus got rid of his officious advice she had still less difficulty in gaining her lover's consent to join him with her sister. The service in the cathedral being finished she and Madame de Lauraguais returned with the king, in triumph as they fancied, to the camp; but they soon found that they had raised a storm on which they had not calculated. It was

soon no secret, even to themselves, that the commonest troopers spoke of them in the most opprobrious terms; ribald songs, of which they were the subject, were sung in their hearing and round their tent; and they presently learnt also that their exploit was not more tenderly dealt with by the friends whom they had left behind in the capital.*

Greater affronts were in store for them. After a few more weeks of successful sieges intelligence suddenly came that Prince Charles had again crossed the Rhine with 60,000 men, and invaded Alsace; that Marshal de Coigny, to whom the defence of that province had been entrusted, had been forced to retire before him; that Stanislaus had fled from Lorraine; that the Austrian advanced guard had already reached Luneville, and that a party in the province was eager to resume their allegiance to Duke Francis. If the authority of Stanislaus and the succession of Louis were to be preserved, that end could only be attained by at once reinforcing De Coigny; and, after a consultation with his marshals and D'Argenson, who had accompanied the army, Louis decided on leaving Saxe with half the army to maintain his ground in the Netherlands, and on hastening with Noailles and the other half to Lorraine. In advising such a plan of operations the commanders and the minister had been influenced more by the political necessity of making any army with which the king himself was present irresistible, than by purely military considerations; for in a military point of view it was more important to preserve the towns which had been taken in Flanders, than to recover the ground which had been

* They were generally spoken of as *les deux courreuses*; a term of which "camp followers" would be an over-complimentary translation.

lost in the Rhenish provinces, which it was impossible for the Austrians to hold permanently ; and the allies were rapidly collecting so large an army about Bruges,* that it was very doubtful whether Saxe with the division which was left to him would be able to make head against them. But that risk it was decided to encounter ; and in the first week of August Louis reached Metz.

The enemy had already retired, in consequence not of his approach, but of the sudden invasion of Bohemia by Frederic, who had taken Prague, and there was no force at the queen's disposal able to check his advance except that which Prince Charles had led into Alsace ; he therefore had been recalled to the defence of his sister's own dominions, and was hastening eastward by forced marches. But the French had hardly reached Lorraine when a sudden illness of the king threw it and the nation in general into greater dismay than could have been caused by the presence of the whole Austrian army. Since his return from Lille Louis had been living a life of great disorder with his mistress ; as was his wont, he had been drinking very hard, and he had recently travelled to Metz with great rapidity in a season of unusually hot weather. A combination of causes threw him into a fever the very day that he reached the city. He was at all times afraid of death, and impatient of suffering, and it is probable that, seeing the desponding view which he himself at once took of his case, the courtly doctors exaggerated his danger ; but it is beyond question that he was seriously ill. The news soon reached Paris that he was dying, and, with a sudden gush of feeling to which large masses

* "Lettres et Mémoires de Maréchal de Saxe," i. 99.

are occasionally subject, the whole population of the city at once elevated him to the rank of a hero and a martyr. After great triumphs which he had achieved in their cause he had fallen a victim to his heroic exertions, and was dying for their sake ; and every church in the whole city was crowded day and night ; every saint was implored ; every altar was loaded with gifts of worshippers eager only for the preservation of so honoured a life. In Metz there was less unanimity ; the physicians, indeed, gave him over, but Richelieu and the courtiers of his stamp who surrounded the royal bed, confidently predicted his recovery. The prelates and other ecclesiastics who had accompanied the court, or who had hastened to Metz on hearing of their master's illness, were piously desirous to prepare him for the change which seemed to await him, but they thought themselves bound to refuse him their holiest ministrations while his mistresses were his nurses. The ladies refused to retire ; Richelieu declared that they should not be removed, and for some time Louis himself rejected all suggestions that he should seek the aid and consolations of the church. It was not, he said, yet time for such things ;* but at last the fear of approaching death overcame every other feeling in his mind ; the Bishop of Soissons, Fitzjames, a kinsman, as a not remote descendant of the last Stuart King of England, and a prelate of uncompromising rigour of morals, received his confession, but made the instant dismissal of the duchess

* "Il n'est pas temps encore."—Soulavie, vii. 1. Louis had the same idea of when such thoughts were seasonable as Mrs. Quickly, by the deathbed of Falstaff: "So a' cried out God, God, God, three or four times. Now I, to comfort him, bade him a' should not think of God. I hoped there was no need to trouble himself with any such thoughts yet."—"Henry V.," ii. 3.

and her sister an indispensable condition of his pronouncing absolution ; and, with the king's sanction, commanded them instantly to withdraw. Presently a second order deprived the duchess of her office of lady of honour to the queen, and the news of her disgrace and that of her sister flying rapidly through the city, roused the populace to such a pitch of fury against them that it was thought they could not appear with safety in the streets ; even in the act of departing the post-master refused them means of conveyance, and, had not Richelieu lent them his own carriage, they must have been exposed to the greatest hardships in obeying the royal orders, to the compliance with which those now in authority would admit of no delay whatever. As they only retired a few miles from the city, the stern prelate exacted from the monarch, whom he assured that he was dying, a further order to them never again to approach within fifty leagues of the court, before he would consent to administer the extreme unction, and under the influence of these threats and warnings Louis complied with every demand ; while, the more unmistakeably to show his repentance, on the arrival of the queen, who, in spite of his neglect of her former request, hastened to his bedside when she heard of his illness, he also begged her pardon for the uneasiness he had caused her. But the warnings of the good Fitzjames proved premature, and his majesty's repentance was soon forgotten. A country doctor whom the regular practitioners denounced as a quack, had from the first declared that the king's illness admitted of an easy cure, and when every one else had failed he was allowed to try his remedy : it was simple enough ; he administered an ordinary emetic, which afforded the patient instant relief, and

in a few hours all appearance of danger passed away. To the distress of the Parisians at his sufferings succeeded an equally immoderate joy at the intelligence of his recovery. The very courier who brought the news was almost suffocated by the embraces of the populace, who loaded even his horse with kisses, while the whole city resounded with cheers; and the title of the Well-Beloved* was conferred on the king by unanimous acclamation. Louis himself, while flattered by the enthusiasm he had created, was no less astonished, and asked what he had done to deserve such great affection.† Unhappily, there was no one at hand to impress on him how easily such goodwill might be lost, and how alone it could be retained; and but few years had elapsed when one of the greatest of the English statesmen affirmed that the one circumstance to be remarked about Louis was that he was "both hated and despised, which seldom happens to the same man."‡

Louis's first thoughts on his recovery were divided between anxiety for the return of his mistress and for the success of his army. Before his illness had assumed its serious character he had sent Noailles forward in quest of the Austrian army, and, as soon as the crisis had passed and he was able to direct his attention to his affairs, he despatched a message to him to remind him that while Louis XIII. was lying dead Condé had gained a victory. Prince Charles, as we have already mentioned, was already on the other side of the Rhine; but early in September Louis

* Le Bien-Aimé.

† "Ah, s'écria-t-il, qu'il est doux d'être aimé ainsi ! Et qu'ai je fait pour le mériter ?"—"Siècle de Louis XV.," c. 12.

‡ "Chesterfield's Letters."—To Mr. Dayrolles, May 19, 1752. Quoted by Lord Mahon.

joined Coigny at Strasburg, and continued with the army during the siege of Friburg, which was invested by the marshal in October, and was defended with great resolution for five weeks, when its surrender enabled him to return to Paris, and receive new honours not only as a convalescent but also as a conquering hero.

We have said that Charles of Lorraine had re-passed the Rhine before Louis and Noailles could reach Metz. To carry out the engagements of the treaty of May Frederic, at the beginning of August, published a manifesto against Austria, in which he declared that he only took up arms to restore peace to Germany and to Europe, and he proceeded to carry out his pacific intentions by invading Bohemia with 100,000 men. Prince Charles was at once recalled from his attack on France to the defence of the Austrian territories; he did not arrive soon enough to save Prague, which was shamefully surrendered to the Prussians after a siege of ten days, but he was soon able to recover it, and being admirably supported by his second in command, Marshal Traun, operated on the communications of the invading army with such skill and effect that it was nearly starved. In a few weeks Frederic was forced to evacuate Prague and the whole of Bohemia, and to retreat to his own country; and throughout the whole of his retrograde march the Austrians hung upon his rear and flanks, and, while they defied all his efforts to bring them to a regular battle, so harassed him with incessant skirmishes that by the time that he reached the frontiers of Silesia, beyond which they did not pursue him, he had lost nearly half his army.

While these events were taking place on the side of Germany other operations were going on in the north

of Italy and the adjacent districts, which at first were of a somewhat chequered complexion, but which eventually produced both disaster and discredit to the French arms. England had a fleet in the Mediterranean, under the command of Admiral Matthews, which for the preceding two years had been the complete mistress of those waters, and which during the winter of 1743 had been chiefly employed in blockading a Spanish fleet in the harbour of Toulon ; but in the spring of 1744 Matthews was blown off the coast by some heavy gales, and was thus unable to prevent a French fleet from joining it : for, though Fleury's detractors accused him of having left the navy in a state of undue depression, the charge was so far from being deserved that at the same time that M. de Roquefeuille quitted Brest to co-operate with the Stuart prince in his projected invasion of England, another fleet of almost equal power was despatched from the same harbour to the Mediterranean, under the command of Admiral de Court, a veteran who had fought at Malaga. He reached Toulon in safety, and, as the combined fleets then numbered twenty-eight sail of the line and four frigates, he took the Spaniards under his command, and put to sea to seek for the British fleet. He was not aware that Matthews had lately received a reinforcement which made him more powerful still, and it was not till the 10th of February, when at last he came up with him, that he discovered that he had been pursuing an enemy for whom he could hardly expect to prove a match. But he was too brave a man to flee, and, though he was equally unaware of it, an ill-feeling existed between Matthews and Rear-Admiral Lestock, his second in command, which went far to neutralize the British superiority of force. In the battle which ensued, and

which lasted nearly two days, Lestock kept aloof with his division, and M. de Court regained his harbour without the loss of a single French ship, while the injury sustained by the Spaniards was limited to the capture of a single 60-gun ship.

The army intended to act in Piedmont, consisting of 20,000 men under the Prince de Conti, and combined with a Spanish force of equal strength under Don Philip, was at first more successful, and Conti could even boast that his arrival had changed the aspect of affairs, since, till he arrived to assist them, the Spaniards already opposed to the Austrians had suffered nothing but disaster. He was not, indeed, able to invade Piedmont as he had intended, so carefully and skilfully had Charles Emmanuel barred all the passes of the Alps which lead into that region, and he was consequently compelled to proceed by the coast towards Nice. But as he advanced he routed a Sardinian army under the Marquis de Susa at Villafranca, taking the marquis himself prisoner, and made himself master of the whole county of Nice, though several of the fortresses held out valiantly for a time, and one of them was only captured by a feat of heroism which shed a lustre over the whole army. Château-Dauphin was perched on an almost inaccessible rock, and garrisoned by 2000 troops; no cannon could possibly be brought against it, but the high-bailiff of Givri and Chevert undertook to carry it by escalade. With marvellous intrepidity the soldiers pressed up the narrow path which was the sole approach to the fort; Charles Emmanuel in person directed the defence, and under his eye a ceaseless cannonade poured upon the assailants. They had no means of replying to the fire which thinned their ranks at every step, but still they pressed on;

SIEGE OF CONI.

presently the high-bailiff was struck down with a severe wound, and, thinking success hopeless, ordered the drummers to sound the retreat. But Chevert disdained to turn back; and, perhaps, persisting in the advance was now the least perilous measure of the two. His men, already trusting to his well-earned renown, were stimulated still further by the sight of his unfaltering gallantry. At last they reached the foot of the ramparts and began to scale them, while some of the most dauntless even forced their way in at the embrasures from which the cannon were pouring death upon their comrades, and cut down the gunners. The place was won, and by the middle of August Coni was the only stronghold in the district which had not been subdued.

It was formally invested on the 13th of September, and, as it was a place of great importance, Charles Emmanuel prepared to make an unusually vigorous effort to relieve it. The besiegers were confined to their entrenchments by the universal hostility of the peasantry of the district, who, forming a well-armed but hardy bands, cut off their convoys and harassed all stragglers without mercy. But the king was so impatient to be willing to trust victory to such desultory warfare, and, though his army of 2000 men was inferior in number to the allies, on the 21st of September he made a regular attack upon the extent of their lines. He was repulsed with the loss of 5000 men; but their victory cost the French and Spaniards 3000, and, being in a foreign country they were less able to replenish their ranks than the enemy. The very next week the king renewed the attack on a smaller scale, concentrating his efforts on a single point, and succeeded in his object by means of a reinforcement of 1000 men, and a large supply of

provisions and ammunition, into the town. It was evident that there could now be no hope of taking it before the winter; the weather was already becoming bad, and, in the middle of October, both French and Spaniards retired towards the Rhone, having destroyed the fortifications of the chief fortresses which they had subdued, but not having been able to preserve one of their acquisitions as an improved starting-place for the next campaign.

In Paris itself this same autumn witnessed events which had a greater influence on the remainder of the reign than the disasters or triumphs of any army. So far had Louis been from really feeling the regret which, when he fancied himself dying, he had expressed to the queen for his past treatment of her, or from being won back to his old affection for her by the forgiving and tender disposition which she displayed, that when on his recovery he left Metz for Strasburg, he refused her entreaties to be allowed to accompany him; and when, after the capture of Friburg, he returned to his capital, he was eager to reward himself for his past exertions in war, and still more for his avowals of repentance and promises of future amendment, by a sedulous resumption of his old habits. He repented, indeed, but it was of having dismissed his mistresses; and he had learnt that they were, or professed to be, indignant beyond measure at the discourtesy with which they had been treated in the palace, and at the insults to which they had been subsequently exposed. In truth, they conceived that they were now in a position to exact their own terms before they would consent to return to the royal embraces. Richelieu was again the convenient go-between; with stories of the reluctance of the duchesses to put themselves in the way of a repetition of their past mortifications, he

stimulated the king's impatience to promise them all their demands, the chief of which was the power of chastising those whom they regarded as their enemies. With assurances of the king's vexation at their absence he calmed the irritation which, no doubt, the ladies really felt; and with true representations of his facility, and of the danger of leaving his mind unoccupied, and at leisure to fall into some other snare, he induced them not to overdo their coyness. The negotiation ended in the triumphant return of those who, three months before, had been expelled from the royal presence with every circumstance of public ignominy, and with the abandonment to their vengeance of all those who, as having been the cause or approvers of their disgrace, had most offended them. Louis, indeed, could not dispense with the services of the Count d'Argenson in the cabinet, so, though he was very obnoxious to them as having been the bearer of the royal order which enjoined them to withdraw, he was suffered to retain his office, and his punishment was limited to being forced to condescend to be the messenger of their recall; but the Bishop of Soissons received orders to confine himself to his diocese. The Duke de la Rochefoucauld, for having exhorted the king to comply with the bishop's demands, was banished; and a similar sentence was passed upon the Duke de Châtillon, because some officious spy had intercepted and transmitted to the court a letter from his duchess to the Queen of Spain, in which she described the scene that had taken place at Metz with too undisguised an exultation.

Madame de Châteauroux was triumphant, but her triumph was short-lived. She had hardly been reinstated in her old favour, and had begun to congratulate herself on the establishment of more than her old

power, before she was seized with an illness which was perceived to be fatal. As was generally the case in those days, her malady was attributed to poison, without the slightest grounds for such a suspicion being discernible. She lingered nearly a fortnight in great suffering, which she bore with unaffected resignation, which had something in it of genuine penitence and humility. She asked pardon of all, and particularly of her sister, Madame de Mailly, looking on her as one whom she had especially wronged by supplanting her in the affections of the king; and, affirming that she had always wished to die on one of the festivals of the Virgin, she died on the 8th of December, the day which the Romish church has consecrated as that of the Conception.

The populace of the capital, who three months before had thought no language of ribald abuse too scurrilous to apply to her, hearing of her composed and devout end, followed her with tears to the tomb. Louis, whose assiduity in sending daily to enquire after her (he abstained from visiting her death-bed), had been at once her pride and her consolation in her agonies, scarcely gave a single day to regret; but at once sent Richelieu, ever ready for any office of infamy in any quarter, to propose to the one sister of the house of Nesle on whom he had not hitherto been able to prevail, to fill her place. Madame de Flavacour, happily for herself, was free from the evil ambition which had overpowered her sisters. It was in vain that the base noble offered her boundless riches, honours for her family, the absolute disposal of all offices in the government or the court. The only object, as she replied to the duke, of which she was ambitious, was the esteem of her contemporaries; that she was resolved not to forfeit. And Louis had to

console himself as he could for a rebuff to which French monarchs had been but little accustomed.

Unhappily the means of such consolation as he required were at hand, and from this time the degradation of king and kingdom proceeded rapidly. Amid her vice and profligacy, Madame de Châteauroux had preserved a certain portion of the high-mindedness which belonged to her birth. She was able, accomplished, and patriotic ; she had placed her pride in the glory of her lover and of her country ; and it was by exciting the king to actions which wore the appearance of honour, that she had hoped to reconcile the people to his and her abandonment of their other duties. But after her death Louis fell into the hands of low-born, sordid adventuresses, insensible to every feeling of honour as of virtue, and whose chief ambition seemed to be to render their reigns conspicuous by new inventions of debauchery, and excesses such as had never before been witnessed or imagined, even in the worst days of the Regency. A woman of the name of Etioles, daughter of a butcher who had supplied some of the government establishments till he became bankrupt, and wife of one of the inferior officers connected with the farming of the revenue, aware that her beauty was remarkable, had for some time set her heart on captivating the king. She had excited the jealousy of Madame de Châteauroux, when, in order to attract the royal notice, she had presented herself in the hunting-field in an equipage of the most glaring magnificence, and occasionally in the, for her, most inappropriate costume of the virgin goddess of the chase ; and the king's admiration of her charms had been so ardent that the duchess had even condescended to threaten her, and to forbid her appearance in the royal presence ; but now the field was open to

her. A few weeks after the duchess's death the dauphin was married to Marie Thérèse Antoinette, an Infanta of Spain, and, among other festivities, the event was celebrated by a masked ball which the city of Paris gave to the king at the town hall. Madame Etioles was one of the company, and, under cover of her mask, entered into conversation with Louis, prolonging it just sufficiently to re-awaken the admiration he had felt for her beauty. Presently, as she slipped away through the crowd, she cunningly dropped her handkerchief. The king, as she had hoped, noticed it and picked it up, and then, as he could not reach her to present it with his hand, he threw it to her with an air of eager gallantry. The action was universally remarked, as both desired that it should be, and from that day the throwing of the handkerchief became in Paris a phrase synonymous with the avowal of admiration and preference. The remaining steps of the transaction were almost matters of course. The lady had apartments assigned to her in the palace, and was created Marchioness of Pompadour, the title of an ancient family which had lately become extinct being renewed in her favour, while M. Etioles was removed to a distant province. Soon all Paris was at her feet; not only nobles like Richelieu, but all the ladies of the court, and even the princesses, while ridiculing her ignorance and vulgarity, congratulated her on her preferment. The queen herself, hoping still to recall her husband some day or other, and therefore determined to give him no offence on any subject, consented to receive her and dine with her. The people in general, who had ceased to trouble themselves about their sovereign's domestic arrangements, contented themselves with passing jokes upon her ancestry, her assumption of the

arms of the old house of Pompadour,* and upon the honours which she procured for her relations.† But no one attempted to counteract her authority, which equalled all that had been offered to Madame de Flavacour; and for nearly twenty years the state was governed by a woman who had not one good quality of either head or heart to recommend her; and who was as incapable of understanding the interests of the kingdom as she was indifferent to its honour.

She had, however, sufficient sense to value the popularity which Louis had acquired the preceding year by sharing the labours and dangers of his soldiers; and was willing, therefore, that he should return to the field, provided she might accompany him, an indulgence which no one interfered to prevent her from obtaining. And early in the spring, Louis, with the dauphin, who, though he was newly married, was eager for military distinction, repaired to the Netherlands. He had forgotten his objection to Saxe's religion, and had raised his army to 90,000 men, with which the marshal was preparing to open the campaign. His conduct in the latter part of 1744 had established his character for pre-eminence of skill in the eyes of all who were competent to form a judgment on matters of strategy. On the withdrawal of Noailles to Lorraine he had been left with scarcely 40,000 men to make head against an allied army of English, Austrian, and Dutch troops which numbered at least 20,000 more; while their generals, knowing their superiority, were unceasing in their endeavours

* "*Vie Privée de Louis XV.*," vol. ii. p. 220.

† Her brother was made Director-General of Buildings, and created the Marquis de Vandières; but his title was commonly pronounced Marquis d'Avant-hier, till he got ashamed of it, and exchanged it for that of the Marquis de Marigny.

to bring him to action ; but so untiring was his vigilance, so admirable the generalship with which he availed himself of his superior knowledge of the country, marching and countermarching, and taking up positions difficult of attack, that during the whole autumn he prevented them from gaining a single advantage over him, or from retrieving any of the losses which they had sustained in the earlier part of the season. And being now, by the magnificent reinforcements which the presence of the king at his headquarters caused to be supplied to him, placed in a condition to assume the offensive, he entertained reasonable hopes of making his own name as famous as that of the marshals who half a century before had won victories and renown in the same district.

It was needful for France to make greater exertions and to obtain some decisive advantages, if the war were to be maintained with any prospect of eventual success, since, in the course of the winter, an event had happened which promised very greatly to add to the strength of Austria. The emperor, Charles VII., had died in January, and, as his eldest son was a youth only seventeen years of age, there was no one who, as a candidate for the vacant throne, could be opposed, with the slightest chance of success, to the husband of Maria Teresa. Saxe therefore resolved to lose no time. Before the end of April he laid siege to Tournai. He found difficulties which, until he arrived before the town, he had not expected ; for, in anticipation of such an attempt, the allies had opened the sluices of a vast reservoir in the neighbourhood, inundating the country for many miles, and thus greatly narrowing his power of keeping open his communications. Instead of four bridges which he had intended to throw over the Scheldt, he was forced

to content himself with one ; but for this disappointment it was some compensation that the water would prevent the garrison from availing themselves of their mines ; and the examination which he was compelled to make of the extent and direction of the inundation revealed to him a weak point in the fortifications, which he at once resolved to attack. It was not the quarter against which it would have been most in accordance with the rules of art to direct his efforts ; but he conceived that the very irregularity of the enterprise would facilitate its success. The engineers agreed with him in the practicability of his plan, and he felt confident that he should be able either to take the place in a fortnight,* or to compel the allies to march to its relief, in which case he had little doubt of a splendid victory. In truth there was but slight appearance of their being able to cope with him. England indeed had performed her engagements, and had raised her contingent to a fine body of 28,000 men, with the king's son, the Duke of Cumberland, at their head. But the Dutch and the petty German states which were members of the confederacy had not furnished half the force which they had bound themselves to supply ; and, though the towns which were to be the prize of the contest belonged to Austria, the entire contribution which that power was able to make to the common cause did not exceed 6000 men. The whole allied army amounted to barely 55,000 men, or at least 10,000 fewer than Saxe, after making ample provision for maintaining the siege of Tournai and protecting his communications, could bring to encounter them ;† and in artillery

* Letter of Saxe to D'Argenson : "Mémoires," i. 164.

† "Most English historians make the difference greater ; though Saxe ("Mém." i. 236) declares that while the allies had 53,000 men, he had not

the disproportion was far greater. Saxe had above 100 guns; the allies had scarcely half that number. But the Duke of Cumberland was a stranger to fear, as was the Prince de Waldeck, the commander of the Dutch division; and Marshal Königsegg, the Austrian general, enjoyed a pre-eminent reputation as a tactician, on which his comrades greatly confided to counterbalance any trifling superiority of numbers. One circumstance in their favour, though of it they probably had no suspicion, was that Saxe, who, if in the forms of religion he differed from the sovereign whom he served, too nearly resembled him in his practice, was at the time seriously ill, and quite unfit to bear the fatigue of a single day of battle, much more of a campaign. Voltaire has recorded that a few weeks earlier he met the marshal, then in a state of great suffering, but preparing to quit Paris to take the command, and that he asked him whether, being as ill as he visibly was, it was safe for him even to risk the journey to the frontier. "It is not," replied the gallant soldier, "a question of going with safety, but merely of going." And he went; but when he had reached his head-quarters it was only in a litter that he could visit the different posts, and it was not always that he was able to bear that trifling motion.*

On the 6th of May he was joined by Louis and the dauphin; and four days afterwards he received the wished-for intelligence that the enemy were close at

so many. Frederic, in his *Memoirs*, rates the whole French army at 80,000, the allies at 50,000. Voltaire, who counts in battalions and squadrons, gives Saxe 106 battalions and 162 squadrons, to 51 battalions of the allies and 90 squadrons. Of modern French historians, Lacretelle states the French army at 90,000, of which 20,000 were left to keep up the siege of Tournai; and the allied army at "not more than 55,000;" and Sismondi agrees with him.

* "*Siècle de Louis XV.*," t. 15.

hand, and that he might expect to be attacked on the morrow. He felt assured of triumph; and the king, who shared his confidence, was equally elated at the news. No king of France, as he reminded those around him, had been accompanied by his son to battle since the fatal day of Poitiers; and no king of France whatever, since St. Louis himself, had gained any advantage over the English.* He hoped that he was about to change the character which hostilities between the two countries had generally borne, and to inaugurate a series of victories. He was not without reasons to justify his confidence. Saxe had not been led by his superiority of numbers to neglect the advantage afforded him by the circumstance that he could choose the ground on which to receive the attack that was preparing for him; and the position which he had selected was as strong as the generally level nature of the country would permit. It was on a slightly rising ground, sloping down towards the side from which the enemy must advance; his right being covered by the Scheldt, and the small village of Antoin; the wood of Barri protected his left; in the rear a bridge, known as the bridge of Calonne, provided for the bringing up of reinforcements, or for the safe retreat of any regiments that might be disabled or disordered. The village of Fontenoy, from which the battle which ensued has taken its name, offered a strong post in front of the centre; and to the unfortunate villagers the preparations for the battle were as destructive as the victory of either side could have been.

* He was referring to the battle of Taillebourg, in which his great ancestor defeated the unwarlike Henry III., who had allowed the Count de la Marche to persuade him to invade France; and who, having landed in the Garonne with 20,000 men, was routed with severe loss, and was nearly taken prisoner.

Fontenoy was intersected by a stream running through a deep ravine, not unlike that at Dettingen ; and Saxe burnt all the houses on the further side, cutting down at the same time the thriving plantations and fertile orchards by which the village was fringed, that they might not afford a screen for the advance of the enemy ; and both villages, as well as the wood, bristled with cannon, which, during the two preceding days, had been carefully and skilfully posted so as to cover the approaches, and had been protected by strongly-made redoubts and entrenchments. The marshal's arrangement of his troops was simple, but such as coincided with the judgment of the army itself.* The whole front was composed of infantry ; behind them were two lines of cavalry ; in their rear, and concealed from the view of the enemy by the inequality of the ground, were several bodies of reserve ; while the household brigade with the carbineers, and a small battery of guns, was to be held in hand as a last resource for the protection of the king and the prince in case of disaster. As the enemy were in sight, the entire army was on the alert the whole night of the 10th ; the king himself lay down in his clothes ; and at six in the morning on the 11th the allies were seen advancing : the Prince of Waldeck on the left, having the assault of Antoin and the French right committed to him ; the Duke of Cumberland on the right, as the post of honour, undertaking the attack of Fontenoy and the entrenchments thrown up in the wood of Barri. Waldeck's task was harder than had been anticipated ; for as Boufflers years before had served under Villars, so the old Duke de Noailles had on this occasion consented to

* "J'en eu la satisfaction de voir la disposition approuvée généralement, tant par les officiers que par les soldats ; ce qui est un grand point à la guerre."—Letter to D'Argenson : "Mémoires," i. 231.

act as second in command to Saxe, and during the preceding night had with great judgment connected the two villages of Antoin and Fontenoy by a line of three well-armed redoubts. By their terrible fire, the Dutch troops suffered so severely that, after sustaining it for little more than half an hour, they recoiled in dismay, nor could all the exertions of the prince bring them up again to renew the attack. On the other side, the English, too, were severely handled; but the Duke of Cumberland, who on this day showed that he combined considerable skill under fire with dauntless resolution, saw that a single redoubt in the wood of Barri was the key of part of the position, and that, if it were once mastered, the rear of the French line would be open to him, and all its communications would be in his power. He at once despatched General Ingoldsby with a sufficient force to storm the redoubt; but that officer, coming unexpectedly on a few companies of irregular cavalry who had been thrown out in its front, overrated their strength so greatly that he fell back to apply for some heavy guns. The opportunity was lost; at the sight of his division, Saxe at once strengthened the point he had menaced, and the only mode of attack now left to the duke was to carry Fontenoy itself, and that portion of the French position which lay between that village and the wood. For above a century this side of the Netherlands had been the chief battle-field of Europe. It had witnessed the rising glories and the last efforts of Condé. It was here that Luxemburg on more than one hard-fought day had shown the superiority of his skill to the stubborn courage of William of Orange and of England. It was here that by still more numerous and more decisive victories Marlborough had retrieved the renown of his country.

But neither Rocroi, Neerwinden, nor Malplaquet itself, had beheld a more dauntless display of resolution and gallantry, or a more terrible and doubtful struggle, than that which for above six hours raged over the narrow plain around Fontenoy. Besides the guns in the different redoubts, a hundred more were posted all along the front of the French line, which kept up a ceaseless fire on the advancing British column. Whole ranks were struck down; but their comrades neither wavered nor quickened their pace,* but pressed on with that steadiness of discipline that is characteristic of the British troops above all others. As they approached the village the different divisions formed into one solid column, keeping up a fire of musketry so rapid, so untiring, and so true, the officers being often seen pressing down the muskets with their canes that the aim might not be too high, that it almost equalled the effect of the French cannon; and against this solid body all the efforts of the French regiments of every kind, infantry, cavalry, and artillery itself, were long expended in vain. Often Saxe, overcoming the weakness and anguish of his body by his energy of spirit, led them in person to the charge; often by his own exertions and dauntless example he rallied broken battalions to which no inferior influence could have restored order. Some of his regiments, indeed, needed no such encouragement. An Irish brigade had been in the service of France ever since the fall of Limerick had finally crushed the hopes of King James in their island, and never had they more brilliantly displayed the impetuous valour of their nation; while some of the French regiments

* "Les Anglais avançaient à pas lents, comme faisant l'exercice."—*"Siècle de Louis XV.,"* c. 15.

equalled the steadiness of their British antagonists. In one, while the marshal himself was watching its advance, the whole front rank went down at once before the terrible fire of the British column; but those behind pressed on with unfaltering calmness. Saxe could not conceal his admiration of their heroism. "How is it possible," he cried, "that such troops should fail to be victorious?" Yet he began to fear that they would fail; and, indeed, if the Dutch could have been recovered from the state of stupefaction into which they seemed to have been thrown, so as to co-operate with the efforts of their British comrades, he would have had reason for his fears.* He was disturbed for the safety of the king, and sent an aide-de-camp to beg Louis to retire with the dauphin across the bridge, so as to put the Scheldt between him and the enemy, while he endeavoured to restore the battle. Louis's answer was an expression of entire confidence in his skill, and a refusal to set his troops a bad example; while the young prince, not yet seventeen years old, drew his sword, and begged to be allowed to lead the household brigade in person against the enemy. Though slowly, the dauntless British column was gaining ground; it had forced its way beyond Fontenoy, which was the key of the whole position,† and Saxe was beginning to think of a general retreat, when one of his officers‡ suggested as a last resource

* Saxe's own statement is that "Pendant plus de quatre heures la bataille était fort douteuse," i. 234; and Voltaire's that "Si les Hollandais avaient passé entre les redoutes qui étaient vers Fonténoi et Antoin, s'ils étaient venus donner la main aux Anglais, il n'y avait plus de ressource, plus de retraite même, ni pour l'armée Française ni probablement pour le roi et son fils."—c. 15.

† "Le village de Fonténoi, qui était le point capital."—"Mém. de Saxe," i. 235.

‡ Lacretelle ascribes the advice to the Count de Lally; other accounts

the employment of the reserve, which had hitherto been kept intact around the king. Saxe hesitated to take a step which might involve his safety ; but Richelieu undertook to procure his consent, and Louis, bravely remarking that on a day of battle it was not the king but the general whose safety was of the first consequence,* cheerfully expressed his approval. Saxe put himself at the head of the carbineers, General Lowendahl took the command of the guard, and their own officers led on the splendid household brigade, all eager to mingle in the desperate struggle, from which they had been withheld too long for their own impatience. The Irish brigade, skilfully handled and unwearied as if they had not yet struck a blow, joined them ; and, while the cannon thundered on the head of the ever advancing British column, 10,000 men and horse, most of whom were fresh, charged it on all sides, and at last succeeded in beating it back. Exhausted with efforts which had now been continued for more than half a day, it felt that it was overpowered ; and, still maintaining a steady order, retreated, and left the field of battle and the glory of victory to the French. The allies had lost nearly 7000 men killed and wounded, a few hundred prisoners, and a few guns. Nor had Saxe gained a bloodless triumph ; his army was diminished by full 5000 men. But the fall of Tournai, which surrendered before the end of the month, set the seal upon the victory as one of great importance ; and Louis could boast that his anticipations had been fulfilled, and that so far he had approached the achievements of his venerated ancestor, the saintly and warlike Louis IX.

give Richelieu the credit of originating the proposal. Saxe does not mention the occurrence at all.

* " Vie Privée de Louis XV., " ii. 207.

And, indeed, he had reason to be proud ; for though it could not be said that he had contributed to the victory, and, indeed, there seems something ironical in the praise which Saxe bestows on him, of having forborne to hamper his operations by any counter-orders of his own,* it was not the less true that he had shown coolness and intrepidity amid danger, and had resolutely refused to secure his own safety at the cost of setting a bad example to the troops, who were not allowed to entertain considerations of that kind for themselves. Nor though Frederic, the most selfish of all politicians, who made war and peace with a view to nothing whatever but his own interest, chose to blame him for putting forth the chief energies of his kingdom in a district remote from what he chose to consider the proper centre of military operations ; and declared that a victory on the Scamander would have been as useful to the common cause as one on the Scheldt, could it be said with the faintest semblance of truth that Fontenoy had been a barren triumph. Tournai was far from being its only fruit ; Ghent was taken in July, in spite of a vigorous effort of the English prince to preserve it, chiefly in consequence of Saxe's admirable arrangements. As he could only spare a small portion of his army for the reduction of that city, which, though fallen from its ancient power and dignity, was still both famous and formidable, he resolved to attack it on two sides at once, and entrusting one part of the enterprise to the Marquis du Chaila, who was to advance against it from the west, and the other to General Lowendahl, who was to

* "Cependant aucune inquiétude n'a éclaté de sa part. Il n'a troublé mon opérations par aucun ordre opposé au mien, qui est ce qu'il y a le plus à redouter de la présence d'un monarque environné d'une Cour," &c.—
i. 234.

approach it from the south, he regulated their marches with such precision that both divisions came in sight of the city at the same hour. Before the end of the same month Bruges and Oudenarde were also taken ; Ostend surrendered in September, Ath in October, and at the beginning of the new year Brussels also received a French garrison. All these acquisitions were the direct fruit of the hard-fought day of Fontenoy, and, as far as the honour of the nation and its sovereign was concerned, France could afford, for such advantages, to lose the alliance of the King of Prussia, who, after having beaten Prince Charles at Hohenfriedberg and Sohr, once more made peace with Austria, and, in return for the absolute cession of Silesia, recognised Francis of Lorraine as emperor.

Nor did the successes of Louis in the Netherlands end with the capture of the capital. He, indeed, was not present at the surrender of Brussels, having returned to Paris at the beginning of the autumn, to reward himself for his military labours by more unrestrained indulgence in the pleasures which his new mistress had prepared for him, but he returned to the camp for the next campaign. He had become fond of war ; his indolent disposition was, indeed, incompatible with any fiery enterprise, but he was indifferent to danger, and he was ambitious of signalizing his reign by some further acquisitions. " He who risks nothing can get nothing," was a saying frequently in his mouth, and he was not the less inclined really to regulate his conduct by this mischievous aphorism, because, while the credit of what might be got would accrue to himself, the risk would be run by his people. Those of his ministers and advisers who were most concerned in the measures necessary for the carrying on of war, D'Argenson and Noailles, were anxious to

terminate it; and as the election to the imperial throne had been fixed to take place in the autumn, they urged him to offer his support to Duke Francis, whose success was certain, as one of the conditions of peace; but Richelieu, ever his evil genius, prevailed on him to reject the advice; and the war was still continued, though he had now no ally but Spain, whose co-operation was limited to the campaign in Italy, where he was fighting her battle rather than his own.

Such a position of subordination to Spain was not conformable to the dignity of France; nor were the aims of Spain, which pointed to a conquest of Italy, more consistent with her interests, which, as was urged by the Marquis d'Argenson, who of all the council had the most statesmanlike mind, would be better consulted by emancipating Italy from foreign domination, and rendering her strong enough to be independent of foreign assistance. It is no small credit to the marquis to have thus, in an age when the true principles of foreign policy were but little understood by any government, been so far in advance of it as to conceive principles which, though their soundness is now generally recognised, have only been adopted in the present generation. In his own day he could make no converts; and, at the beginning of the summer of 1745, the army destined for service in Piedmont, and now under the command of Marshal Maillebois, advancing along the coast, entered that kingdom by the valley of the Tanaro; while the Count de Gages, the Spanish commander-in-chief in the kingdom of Naples, moved northwards to join it. As the two armies drew near, the Genoese Government, which had just concluded a treaty with Spain and Naples, reinforced them with a numerous and well-appointed contingent, and the entire force,

consisting of 70,000 men, was superior by at least 20,000 to any which the Austrians and Sardinians could oppose to it. But Charles Emmanuel and Count Schulemburg, the Austrian general, were both skilful soldiers, and had taken up a position at Bassignana, between the Tanaro and the Po, sufficiently strong to counterbalance their inferiority of numbers. It was in vain that Maillebois and Gages tried to provoke them to leave it by attacking the surrounding cities, few of which could make any resistance. They took Tortona, Piacenza, Parma, Pavia; but the king and the count remained immovable till they learnt that the Duke de Vieuville with a considerable force had been admitted into the city of Milan, which, indeed, was at all times defenceless, and that he was preparing to besiege the citadel; on which Schulemburg, fearing that the loss of that stronghold might endanger the whole territory, quitted the camp to reinforce its garrison, and instantly Maillebois and Gages fell on Charles Emmanuel, drove him from Bassignana, and permanently cut him off from his ally. In the next week or two Valenza, Asti, and Casal submitted to the French; Alessandria was blockaded, apparently without a prospect of deliverance, and the only prospect of saving the rest of his territories left to the king seemed to be the conclusion of a separate peace, which the French were willing to grant him. During the winter negotiators on both sides had frequent conferences with this object, and in February 1746 preliminaries were actually signed at Paris; but, though France was willing to adhere in perfect good faith to the conditions stipulated, which included a considerable augmentation of the Sardinian territory at the expense of Austria, it was manifest that she would be unable to execute them

without the acquiescence of Spain, and the Spanish Government, at that time entirely directed by the queen, who, being a princess of Parma, was jealous of the aggrandizement of Sardinia, refused its consent to the treaty till it was too late. Had Maillebois been allowed to direct his operations according to his own judgment he would have drawn off his troops from Alessandria and have retired towards the coast, where he could keep open his communications with Provence; but in reply to his proposal to do so he received a peremptory order from Paris to maintain the blockade;* and Charles Emmanuel, suspecting from the needless delay that had taken place that the negotiations were only intended to amuse him till that fortress also was lost to him, at the beginning of March finally broke them off, and reunited himself to Austria.

Meanwhile the Duke of Lorraine had been elected emperor, and the empress-queen, to give her the title by which she is henceforth known, was enabled by the Peace of Dresden to direct the whole of her attention to her outlying provinces; and, as the preservation of the Netherlands was in her mind a very secondary object to that of her Italian dominions, she at once sent a strong reinforcement to Schulemburg's army, and replaced the marshal himself by the Prince of Lichtenstein, young, ambitious, enterprising, and, as the event proved, skilful. Supported by this powerful aid Charles Emmanuel began rapidly to retrieve his fortunes; he recovered Asti, and compelled Maillebois

* Voltaire attributes this to the prevalence of Spanish influence in the French councils:—"Le Maréchal de Maillebois écrivit au mois de Décembre, 1745, 'Je prédis une destruction totale si on s'obstine à rester dans le Milanais.' Le conseil d'Espagne s'y obstina, et tout fut perdu."—"Siècle de Louis XV.," c. 19.

to raise the blockade of Alessandria, when the garrison, which had supported the privations of a siege of five months with admirable constancy, had scarcely provisions left for a single day. Before the end of March Lichtenstein drove the Spaniards from Milan, and, as fresh troops were arriving almost daily from Germany, at last compelled both Maillebois and Gages to shut themselves up in Piacenza, where it was certain that the want of supplies would prevent them from continuing for any length of time. Here he gradually hemmed them in, spreading his forces over the whole country; and as by the middle of June it became known that the Sardinian army also was approaching, Maillebois and Gages saw that their only hope of safety lay in forcing their way through the Austrian lines before his arrival. On the night of the 15th of June they sallied forth to attack them. Even had all been well managed they had not sufficient strength to secure success in such an enterprise, but the arrangements were defective and ill-concerted, and in the darkness both armies, and especially the French, fell into confusion. At the very outset they found their advance hampered among hedges, coppices, and marshes; when they fell back, they became entangled with the Spaniards, and, though at last they so far succeeded that they reached the open country, the French division lost above half its numbers in the achievement.* The Spaniards, who had found a weaker part of the enemy's position, suffered less severely.

* There is a great discrepancy in the account of the losses sustained by the allies at the battle of Piacenza. Sismondi affirms that they lost 6000 men, and the Austrians 5000. Voltaire states the loss at 8000 killed and wounded, and 6000 prisoners; while Lacretelle gives that as the amount of the French loss alone, who also left behind a portion of their artillery and baggage.

A few days afterwards Maillebois found his difficulties greatly augmented by the death of the King of Spain, which led to a change in the political views of that nation, and to the supersession of Gages by the Marquis de los Minas, who was very inferior in capacity, and was also less disposed to friendly co-operation with the French marshal. But he still maintained a resolute countenance; and, aided by his son, the Count de Maillebois, who had already the credit of having suggested the diversion of the previous year into the Milanese which led to the advantage gained at Bassignana, manœuvred on both sides of the Po with such skill that he re-established his communications with the coast sufficiently to secure his line of retreat from the country; and he soon learnt that if he desired to withdraw the remnant of his army, which did not now exceed 11,000 men, in safety, he had no time to lose, for before the end of August Genoa itself was lost to the cause. An English fleet had been for some time blockading it by sea, and when Lichtenstein and Charles Emmanuel appeared on the landward side of it with 60,000 men, the most sanguine patriot felt that resistance to such a force would be not courage but insanity. Genoa submitted to the terms imposed on it, among which was a heavy contribution towards the expenses of the war, and at the end of October both French and Spaniards recrossed the Var, and sought refuge in Provence. The Austrians pursued them, ravaging that and the neighbouring province of Dauphiné with great ferocity; but before Maillebois could muster sufficient force to check them they were recalled by a fresh outbreak of Genoa, where the extortions of their officers had driven the citizens to a desperate attempt to shake off their yoke. Many years elapsed before a

French army was again seen in Piedmont. Marshal Belleisle, indeed, succeeded in persuading Madame de Pompadour that he could retrieve the disasters which had befallen Maillebois, though, in truth, that marshal's misfortunes were owing solely to the neglect of his warnings by the Government; and, having obtained the appointment to supersede him, gained some advantage over an Austrian division which had been left to maintain its hold on Provence. The success which he then achieved ruined him. Thinking it possible to recover Piedmont, he divided his army in order to distract the attention of the Sardinians by menacing two points at once, giving the command of one division to his brother, the Chevalier de Belleisle, with instructions to cross the Alps in the neighbourhood of the Monte Viso, while he himself led on the other through the valley of the Stura. In an operation requiring vigilance and prudence above all other qualities, his brother, if the opinion of the Parisians had been well founded, would have been more likely to succeed than himself, for they had nicknamed the marshal Imagination, and the chevalier Common Sense; but the description of the latter's qualifications certainly did not extend to military operations. Instead of keeping to the most frequented passes, he led his force over some of the highest parts of the great mountain chain; and attacking a fortress near Exilles, so strongly situated that a handful of resolute men could have held it against an army, was completely routed, and slain. He had in some degree redeemed his rashness and the disaster he had brought upon his followers by the most brilliant personal gallantry; and the desperate courage with which his men sought to carry the fort is attested by the unusual proportion which the slain

bore to the wounded. The dead were 4000; those whose injuries were not mortal amounted to 2000. On hearing of his brother's defeat the marshal retraced his steps, and the fleur-de-lis, as the ensign of France, had given place to another and a less noble banner before a French soldier again planted foot on the Alps as an enemy.

If the Austrians undervalued their possessions in the Netherlands, and were disposed to make but trifling exertions for their preservation, their supineness was counterbalanced by the activity of their British and Dutch allies, to whom that region offered the most convenient battle-field; while the nearness of its frontier to Paris made the conquest of the Flemish fortresses especially tempting to the French commanders, and important to the French Government. In the Netherlands, therefore, Saxe was still continued in the command of the principal army; and in the spring of 1746 Louis rejoined his great marshal, who speedily added Antwerp to his trophies; while Conti, who had been transferred from Italy to act as one of his lieutenants, reduced Charleroi and Mons; and the Count de Clermont, aided by General Brulart, the chief engineer, who, like Vauban in former days, often had the chief direction of any sieges of especial difficulty entrusted to his scientific skill, took Namur, still perhaps the best fortified of all. It was clear that, if the Austrians were not absolutely indifferent to the preservation of their Flemish dominion, they must succour it without delay; and, yielding to this conviction, before the end of the summer their Government despatched Prince Charles to make head against the invaders, and, if possible, to stem the torrent of their success. The greater part of the British contingent which had fought so sturdily at Fontenoy in

the preceding year, had been recalled to their own country to crush the last insurrection by which the grandson of King James strove to re-establish his family on the throne ; but a few regiments had been left behind to demonstrate the fidelity of the British Government to the allied cause ; and, when they and the Dutch troops joined the prince, the entire force at his disposal did not fall short of 80,000 men. Saxe's army, even after deducting a division which was employed in covering the siege of Namur, was more numerous by nearly a fourth, so that he was able to assume the offensive with great vigour. By a series of able manœuvres he first drove the prince from a strong position which he had taken up on the banks of the Meuse, and then attacked him at Raucoux, a village between Liège and Maestricht. Here also the prince was strongly posted. A series of thick hedges and ravines covered the greater part of his front, while the portions of his line which were more accessible were protected by powerful batteries. But Saxe saw that similar obstacles to those which made it difficult for him to attack the enemy in front would also prevent the different parts of their army from supporting one another ; and that therefore a defeat of any one division would throw the whole into disorder. It was the 11th of October. There had been one or two partial skirmishes on the preceding day, all resulting in favour of the French, who gained possession of some heights which promised to be of importance in the coming battle ; but the French soldiers scarcely needed the encouragement which might have been derived from the issue of these trifling combats.* Saxe had at all times eminently

* A full account of the battle of Raucoux and the previous operations

the art of inspiring confidence in his followers, and on the present occasion an anecdote is preserved which strikingly illustrates the way in which he had taught them to look on a battle as merely a temporary interruption of their ordinary amusements, to be followed by an immediate resumption of them. Every evening the camp was enlivened by private theatricals; but on the night of the 10th, when the curtain fell, the leading actress advanced to the foot-lights and gave notice that the next day there would be no performance on account of the intended battle; but that on the 12th the company would have the honour of representing "The Village Cock."* No doubt the performance took place; for on the 11th the position of the allies was forced at all points. Four thousand men were killed or wounded, 3000 prisoners were taken, with 50 guns, many standards, and a considerable portion of baggage; and the whole army was driven across the Meuse, over some bridges which the prince had taken the precaution to construct beforehand. Had not the ground been too unfavorable for Saxe's cavalry to act, the enemy's loss would have been much heavier; but their repulse across the river left him in possession of the whole district, and for a moment seemed likely to lead to the re-establishment of peace.

For peace almost every country was anxious, and for none was it more desirable than for France. The reign of Madame de Châteauroux had been signalized by vast expenses, which had not been incurred for the king's other mistresses; and already the rapacity of Madame de Pompadour had thrown all preceding ex-

is contained in Saxe's "*Mémoires*," iii. 249, and in a letter from Saxe himself, p. 266.

* Lacretelle, ii. 357.

tortions of a similar kind into the shade. During the first few months of her favour, in addition to the yearly income to be derived from estates which had been conferred on her, she had obtained presents in money to the amount of above two millions, while the continual entertainments which she insisted on, and where the king nightly incurred prodigious losses at the gaming table, absorbed even larger sums. The accumulations of Fleury's wise economy were already dissipated, and again distress began to overwhelm the rural districts. In Guienne people were dying of hunger, and in other provinces the peasantry only sustained life on bread made of fern. To these pressing reasons for bringing the war to a termination were added the personal inclinations of the most influential personages in Paris. Louis himself had become sated of war, and, as far as he could be said to have any inclinations whatever which were not dictated to him by others, was more disposed to peace. The mistress wished for it that she might be able to dip her hands into the public purse more unrestrainedly than it was possible while war also continued to make demands on it. A body of literary men, with Voltaire at their head, who had lately become the fashion at the court, in the interest of a philosophical philanthropy which he affected, denounced all war on principle; while D'Argenson* objected to the continuance of the existing hostilities on large general principles of statesmanship; and he had so far prevailed that, even before the battle of Raucoux, conferences with England had been opened at Breda. In accordance with the strange inconsistency which was then admissible in public affairs, Holland, though her

* "Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson," 325; quoted by Sismondi.

army, under Prince Waldeck, had fought at Fontenoy, and was still in the field ready to fight again at Raucoux, was not reckoned to be at war with France because no formal declaration of hostilities had passed between the two countries ; and availing themselves of this character of nominal neutrality the Dutch Government offered its mediation between France and England ; but, after three or four months of discussion, the negotiations were broken off, because the English ministers declined to conclude anything without the concurrence of their allies Austria and Sardinia ; and those governments, though not expressly refusing to treat, were so dilatory in appointing plenipotentiaries that it was impossible to avoid suspecting their sincerity. Accordingly, in the spring, hostilities were renewed, and, as if in resentment at the disappointment, Louis declared war against Holland also, a measure which, though fully justified by the conduct of the States, was hardly politic, since it greatly strengthened the English party, and led immediately to the appointment of the reigning Prince of Orange, who was married to a daughter of George II., as hereditary stadtholder, and to the conversion of the republic into a monarchy in all but name, under a ruler led by every principle of family and traditional policy to be ever unfriendly to France.

The first effect of this formal addition of Holland to the list of her avowed enemies was advantageous to France in one respect, inasmuch as it opened to the army a district as yet unwasted ; for the government of the Hague was taken by surprise, and wholly unprepared to resist invasion ; and Saxe at once poured his troops over the Dutch Netherlands, taking town after town almost without resistance, and levying heavy contributions on the surrounding districts.

Towards the end of June he was joined by Louis, and then, remembering that the capture of Maestricht seventy years before had led to the glorious peace of Nimeguen, he proposed to attack that city, in the hope of compelling a similar termination to the present war; but his way was barred by the enemy with 120,000 men. The complete suppression of the Scotch rebellion had enabled the Duke of Cumberland to return with a splendid British force, and take the command of the whole. The Austrian contingent, too, had been strengthened, and the entire army, far surpassing in numbers and effectiveness any force which the allies had previously assembled in this war, was strongly posted in front of the village of Laufeldt. A line of entrenchments had been skilfully constructed and heavily armed, supporting one another and sweeping the approaches with a cross fire, while thick orchards and plantations protecting each flank were filled with batteries and musketeers. The skill of Saxe, whom Louis had lately promoted to the rank of marshal-general, an appointment previously given to no one but Turenne, and the circumstance that a greater uniformity and precision of operations ought to be expected from an army under one head, than from one commanded by three generals of different countries, was all to which the French could trust for counterbalancing odds of number, and the strength of such a position; but these advantages proved sufficient. On the morning of July 2nd, Saxe led his men to the attack. The Dutch could not withstand the impetuosity of his onset. The Austrians, under Count Bathyany, apparently through some misunderstanding of the plan of the battle, stood still, waiting to be attacked, and in that expectation abstaining from going to the support of their allies; and the whole

brunt of the day was borne, as had generally been the case, by the British troops.* They were posted in Laufeldt itself, and long sustained the assault of the bulk of the French infantry with admirable steadiness. Whole lines of their assailants fell before their sustained and deadly fire. Three times the French were repulsed, and it was not till Saxe, while making a fourth assault on the front of the village, sent round at the same time a large body of his choicest cavalry to turn it by a flank attack, that the Duke of Cumberland gave the order to retreat. He himself had nearly been taken prisoner. He was always anxious to mingle personally in the conflict, and, being shortsighted, had advanced so far towards the French dragoons, that he was only rescued by a gallant charge of the English lifeguards, under Sir John Ligonier, an officer whose valour proved disastrous to himself, since his horse was killed under him, and he was taken prisoner. Again the only proof of victory left to the French was the field of battle and a few guns; for the slaughter in their ranks far exceeded that of the allies, and any attempt upon Maestricht was more out of the question now than it had been a week before.

The result of so hard fought a day naturally increased the desire for peace, to which Louis himself did not now hesitate to give open expression. Sir John Ligonier, who was nearly seventy years of age, had been born a French subject, his family having only quitted the country on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes; and on the night of the battle he

* This is admitted by all French writers:—"Les Anglais furent encore dans cette bataille ceux qui firent la plus brave résistance."—"Siècle de Louis XV.," c. 26. See also "Mémoires" of Saxe, iv. 166, 291.

was admitted to the king's table, who, lamenting the carnage which had taken place in both armies, and especially in his own, asked whether it would not be better to think seriously of peace than to cause the death of so many brave men. There was little doubt that the allies must be coming to the same opinion, and to quicken their inclination, Saxe, though unable to besiege Maestricht, detached Lowendahl to attack Bergen-op-Zoom. It was curious that, while the commander of the English cavalry had been a Frenchman, the French commander-in-chief, and Lowendahl, who for military skill was only second to him in the whole army, were both foreigners. Lowendahl was a Dane, who had been in the service of Russia during the reign of the Empress Anne, and, being driven from that country by the revolution which placed Elizabeth on the throne, had been persuaded by Saxe to embrace the service of Louis.* Bergen-op-Zoom was worthy of the skill of a consummate commander; for the whole country had no fortress of a higher reputation for impregnability. In former days it had resisted the utmost efforts of Parma and Spinola, as at a later period it repelled even the general for whom St. Sebastian had proved too weak; and, since the discomfiture of the great Spanish generals before its walls, Cohorn had lavished all his skill upon its fortifications

* According to Walpole, the Dutch found out more points of similarity between Saxe and his friend than their foreign birth. There is a print, published in Holland, of the Devil weighing the Count de Saxe and Count Lowendahl in a pair of scales, with this inscription:—

Tous deux vaillants,	Tous deux galiards,	Tous deux sans foi.
Tous deux galants,	Tous deux pailliards,	Tous deux sans loi.
Tous deux constants,	Tous deux bâtards,	Tous deux à moi.

It was not, however, Lowendahl himself, but his grandfather, who had been a natural son of the king of Denmark.—Letter to Mann, May 5, 1747.

till they were accounted his masterpiece. But on this occasion it scarcely held out a month. The garrison was ample, 12,000 of the best troops of the republic, but their efforts were neutralized by the unfitness of the governor, an officer named Cromstrom, to cope with his assailant. He had not always been unfit; on the contrary, he had earned his honorable post by many years of faithful service and gallant achievement; but he was more than eighty years of age, and after a few weeks the demands made upon him for constant exertion and watchfulness by the energy of the besiegers proved too much for his strength. He was quite worn out; but, with a mistaken sense of what was due to his country and to his own honour, he refused to resign his command. On the 15th of September, after a month of open trenches, Lowendahl succeeded in making some slight breaches in the walls, and, storming them at midnight in three places at once, he made himself master of the place. Unhappily the soldiers tarnished their triumph by the most ruthless cruelty, pillaging and massacring even the unarmed citizens. But their barbarity and want of discipline was not suffered to deprive their general of his reward. Lowendahl received a marshal's staff, and had the honour of having his exploit considered as that which had the most immediately contributed to the re-establishment of peace.

Besides the personal motives which, as has been already mentioned, made Louis and his advisers desirous of peace, another potent reason was furnished by the uninterrupted disasters which had befallen the navy. A British squadron, indeed, which, under Admiral Lestock, had been despatched to attack Port l'Orient, was forced to retire, both from that place and from Quiberon, without having accom-

plished anything beyond the destruction of one or two insignificant forts; but on the other side of the Atlantic a similar force, under Commodore Warren, co-operating with a land expedition equipped by the British colonies in North America, captured Louisbourg and Cape Breton, on which great sums had been lately expended with the view of making the island a valuable fishing station. And in the open sea the British seamen were irresistible. The first battle was fought by a fleet which at the beginning of 1747 was despatched from Brest, of such strength that it was intended that when it reached the Canaries it should divide into two squadrons, one of which should cross the Atlantic to recover Cape Breton, while the other should proceed to the East Indies to support Dupleix, who, as we shall hereafter* have occasion to mention, was labouring, with a genius that deserved a better fate, to establish a great settlement in India. The English Government, however, had been apprized of the expedition and its intended objects in time enough to send out a fleet to intercept it, which they placed under the command of Admiral Anson, who had just earned a pre-eminent reputation by the circumnavigation of the world under circumstances that severely tested his skill as a commander both of ships and men. And he now took his station off Cape Finis-terre, in the hope of falling in with the entire fleet. On the 3rd of May the French commander-in-chief, the Marquis de la Jonquière, as he sailed down the Bay of Biscay descried the enemy, and scorned to shrink from the contest which, as he saw, was prepared for him, being the more confident of the result, because it was evident that the British were inferior

* *Vide infra*, p. 313.

in number. Anson, indeed, had but fourteen ships, while he had sixteen; but several of his were, in fact, only armed merchantmen or frigates, while nearly all Anson's were ships of the line. He was utterly defeated, with the loss of six vessels, one of which was his own flagship. And in the autumn of the same year another English admiral, the celebrated Hawke, with a fleet of exactly the same size as Anson, fell in with a French fleet under Admiral de l'Etendeur, which, though inferior in strength to that of M. de la Jonquière, was of far greater importance in one respect, since it was convoying above 250 merchantmen with cargoes of immense value. Hawke took all the men-of-war but two. And though the French admiral, who displayed not only the most resolute courage, but the most admirable skill, maintained the fight so long that the merchantmen were able to escape, the result of the two battles was discouraging, as proving that, whatever efforts might be made in the French dockyards, the resources of England would at all times enable her to retain her old pre-eminence as the mistress of the seas. In the Indian waters she was as irresistible as in Europe. Commodore Barnet captured an entire squadron, men-of-war as well as merchantmen; and though he died, and was succeeded in the command by a Captain Peyton, who, in spite of being at the head of a finer force than had ever been at Barnet's disposal, fled whenever he saw an enemy, yet the disgrace inflicted by that coward on the arms of England lasted only for a single season; and in 1747 a fresh squadron, and a fresh commander, Captain Griffin, reached the Bay of Bengal, captured almost every French vessel in those regions, and even endangered the establishments which were beginning to flourish on the mainland.

At the same time, these triumphs of her fleets had not cooled the wish of England for peace. She was maintaining the Hanoverian troops as well as her own; she was also paying Austria and Sardinia yearly subsidies, which severely taxed her resources; and Holland, the only ally whose assistance was of any real value, was greatly discouraged by the loss of Bergen-op-Zoom. She therefore in March, 1748, sent Lord Sandwich as plenipotentiary to Aix-la-Chapelle, to meet the Marquis de St. Severin, who was despatched from Paris with similar powers, and the Count Bentinck on the part of the stadtholder. But at the same time the preparations for another campaign proceeded with a diligence as unabated as if there were no thoughts of any pacification. The Duke of Cumberland was at the head of 80,000 men at Ruremonde, on the Meuse; and though St. Severin made the magnanimous declaration that "his master was offering peace in the spirit of a king, not of a trader," Saxe, the first week in April, invested Maestricht, in the hope that the danger of so important a place would quicken the zeal of the allied negotiators, and dispose them to agree to more favourable terms. And his calculations were not disappointed; before the end of the month preliminaries were signed, containing among others, the singular condition that Saxe should be allowed the compliment of being supposed to have taken Maestricht, which was to be surrendered to the French, and restored again at the final conclusion of the treaty. An armistice was agreed to at the same time; but the negotiations in matters of detail were protracted so long, that it was not till the 18th of October that the Peace known as that of Aix-la-Chapelle was definitively concluded.

Eager as every one had been for it, it could not be

said to have pleased any one except the Dutch, who, having made no acquisitions, had nothing which they could be called on to restore, while they recovered the towns which they had lost; for the most important article of the treaty provided that all the belligerents should make restitution of their conquests. But Maria Teresa was indignant beyond measure that Silesia was not understood to be included. It could not, indeed, well have been mentioned, since, above two years before, she had made a separate peace with its conqueror; but she loudly complained that England had sacrificed her interests; and the resentment which she expressed was so permanent a feeling, that in the next war it led to her seeking the alliance of Louis rather than that of King George. Charles Emmanuel was offended at having to give up Piacenza, which, with Parma and Guastalla, was to be erected into a principality for the Spanish prince Don Philip. The King of England was irritated, because he felt that if the negotiations of Breda had not been broken off, he might then have kept Cape Breton. And, though it was a great advantage to France to recover that settlement, and to have Stanislaus again peaceably established in Lorraine, a stipulation which the English ministry insisted on as indispensable, that the Stuart princes should be removed from France, was generally felt to be a stain on the national honour; for the whole people had taken a worthy pride in the shelter they had afforded to a family of exiled princes, who, on one side, were so nearly related to their own kings; and now to withdraw that protection under compulsion, seemed a disgrace for which no recovery of distant territories could compensate. But the condition, however unpalatable, was faithfully executed, even though the conduct of the princes themselves made

it especially difficult to perform it with graciousness. The son of the old Pretender, Charles Edward, the leader of the rebellion of 1745, since his return from Scotland had resided chiefly in Paris. Louis now announcing to him the necessity of departure, offered him a home at Friburg, with the title of the Prince of Wales, an ample allowance, and a small military establishment. He disdained the offer. Louis prevailed on the Pretender himself, who lived at Rome, to send him a letter, enjoining his acceptance of it. He still refused, believing that the Government would never employ force against him. But in this he found himself disappointed. In December, as he was going to the opera, he was stopped by a body of French guards, and conveyed to Vincennes, from which fortress, a few days afterwards, he was sent to Savoy. For some years he wandered about the continent, in vain soliciting the different potentates to aid his schemes of unquiet ambition. So little interest was taken in his movements that in the course of them he revisited Paris in disguise, and even London, without either the French or British Government suspecting or regarding his presence. But he found that even in England his friends were no longer willing to incur certain destruction for his sake. The last portion of his life he spent at Rome, where, in 1780, he died, at a moment when a new order of things was about to commence in France, and to establish a Government which, had he lived to see it, might probably have delighted to espouse his cause, and to make his pretensions the pretext for an attack on the Hanoverian dynasty.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN the view of the brilliant writer who first sketched the age of Louis XV., the interval of peace at which we have now arrived was the golden age of modern Europe; but as applied to France, such a remark was dictated by a narrow observation of the luxury and splendour which Voltaire beheld in the court and in a few great cities; and it must have been greatly qualified had he cast his eyes lower down to the general body of the people. It is true that the peace which once more rendered the sea safe to the merchantman, had revived commerce; that the increase of foreign trade reanimated the national manufactures, and that the wealth which flowed in from these sources was conspicuously exhibited in the embellishment of the metropolis and of the great provincial towns which were the chief scenes of commercial and manufacturing enterprise. In Paris, the boulevards and Champs Elysées were planted with avenues of stately trees to furnish shady walks for hours of recreation. The Seine was edged with well-planned quays, on which vessels might unload the supplies brought from foreign lands to Havre. At that town, at Bordeaux, and at Marseilles, the chief marts of foreign trade; at Lyons, at Rouen, and at Toulouse, the seats of the most important manufactures, splendid houses for individuals, halls and theatres for the public amuse-

ment, were raised side by side with market-places and exchanges. Even Louis himself became a manufacturer and a tradesman. He established at Sèvres the celebrated manufactory of porcelain which ever since his time has produced those exquisite specimens of the potter's art which even the longer experience of the Chinese is unable to rival; and he turned the great gallery at Versailles into a shop for their exhibition and sale, often himself dilating on their elegance to his courtiers, and facilitating their purchase by drafts on the royal treasury, or grants of lucrative preferment.*

But these sources and indications of increasing prosperity did not affect the lower classes. They, and more especially the agricultural portion of them, were still suffering the very extremity of destitution and misery. In the cultivation of the land no improvement had been made since the time of Sully, if, indeed, we may not say that the restrictive policy of Colbert had rather deteriorated it. In every province large tracts remained altogether untilled, sometimes from a deficiency of population, sometimes because the tax-gatherers had swept away the cattle and implements requisite for tillage. And still, in years of scarcity, which consequently were far from uncommon, the miserable peasantry sustained life on bread made of fern, and often on masts and husks, such as the

* Tout le monde a su l'anecdote suivante. L'abbé de Pernon, jeune conseiller au Parlement, était comme les autres à admirer les morceaux les plus rares de cette manufacture dans la galerie de Versailles, lorsque le roi en passant lui dit, "Eh bien, abbé, prenez cela; c'est beau;" et lui montra en même temps ce qu'il y avait de plus magnifique. "Sire," répondit l'abbé, "je ne suis pas assez gros seigneur, ni assez riche." "Prenez, toujours," répliqua le roi; "une bonne abbaye payera tout." En effet sa majesté, ayant trouvé le grand aumônier, lui ordonna de conférer à l'abbé de Pernon le meilleur bénéfice vacant.—"Vie Privée de Louis XV.," ii. 257.

ancient poets, indeed, reported to have been the original food of primeval man, but which in no other civilized country had been given to anything but cattle.

And if a large deduction from Voltaire's panegyric is required by facts like these, a still greater will be made by those who look on national virtue and honour not only as the sole legitimate foundations of permanent prosperity, but as the very essence without which it can have no real existence for even the briefest space. For they were now utterly extinct; so completely forgotten as to be no longer subjects even for ridicule. It is true that virtue, in the sense which religion and morality affix to the term, had long been nearly banished from the court and the capital; but for some generations patriotism, not, indeed, often free from the alloy of selfishness, but still genuinely eager for the welfare of the country, confident of its excellence, and proud of its glory; and loyalty, not, as we have seen, untainted with servility, but still frequently chivalrous and devoted; and a fiery sense of personal honour, had softened and in some degree screened the vice which they did not extinguish, and had prevented it from having its worst political effect of contaminating and debasing the whole people. But now not only every principle of religion, but even every sentiment of honour and decency, was openly trampled under foot. Every kind of influence and authority was absorbed by Madame de Pompadour, whose sole object was to reduce all around her to her own level of infamy. Profligacy, and subservience to profligacy, were the sole avenues to court favour or official preferment; while, as if in search of some logical justification for their debaucheries, Louis and his low-born mistress

encouraged no votaries of literature or science but those who belonged to a new school which had sprung up within the last generation, and the disciples of which, arrogating to themselves exclusively the title of philosophers, openly derided the truth of revelation, and devoted their great powers to the task of making the national church, and, through its sides, Christianity itself ridiculous.

The sole vestige of any remnant of the ancient feeling for the credit of the nation was shown in the indignation which the removal of Prince Charles Edward continued to excite. To be the protector of princes in distress had been the most really honorable of all the boasts of the late king; to renounce that character at the bidding of a foreign sovereign was felt by all but the basest sycophants of the court to be a degradation not only of Louis but of the whole people, and countless were the epigrams and pasquinades which on that account were levelled at him and at his mistress. The perfunctory observance paid to him on his throne was contrasted with the respect with which all regarded his cousin in the dungeon at Vincennes,* or in his exile in Savoy; while the marchioness was compared with Agnes Sorel, or sometimes with Madame de Châteauroux, to make the sensual slavery in which she held the monarch still more odious by the recollection of the warlike and vigorous counsels which those in her situation had in

* "O Louis, vos sujets, de douleur abattus,
 Respectent Édouard captif et sans couronne;
 Il est roi dans les fers; qu'êtes-vous sur le trône?
 J'ai vu tomber le sceptre aux pieds de Pompadour!
 Mais fut-il relevé par les mains de l'amour,
 Belle Agnès, tu n'es plus" . . . &c.

The whole poem, with several others on the same subject, is given in the Appendix.—"Vie Privée de Louis XV.," ii. 313.

times past had the spirit to suggest and the skill to render acceptable. To satirize Louis was safe; daily sinking deeper and deeper, he had become callous even to contempt, and, had he not been, was too lazy to be severe, but the marchioness was revengeful and active. Berryer, the head of the police, was devoted to her, and eager to track out all who by deed or word offended her, and soon the Bastille was crowded with such prisoners; while some were condemned to a yet harder fate, and sent to Mont St. Michel, a rocky islet on the Norman coast, to expiate their offence in iron cages of such narrow dimensions that no full-grown person could either stand upright or lie at full length in them. On one occasion Berryer's tyrannical violence provoked the citizens to resistance. Among those whom his agents seized were a number of young girls, some belonging to families in circumstances sufficiently easy to make it probable that their parents would be willing to purchase their liberation; some of remarkable beauty, on the object of whose apprehension practices which afterwards became notorious threw too clear a light. At the moment, however, the populace imputed neither corruption to the intendant of police, nor any design to minister to the licentious passions of his patrons; but a preposterous story had gained belief that the king, finding his strength and spirits impaired by his mode of life, had been ordered baths of youthful blood as the best restorative. Maddened by the mere mention of such horrors, the probability of which no one stopped to examine, the citizens rose against the police officers, killed one, maltreated others, and proceeded in a strong body to attack the police-office itself. Berryer had fled, but his wife, a woman of great dignity of appearance and of undaunted courage, threw open the

gates of the court-yard and harangued the rioters with such effect that they retired, and proceeded to the house of Maupeou, the First President of the Parliament. Maupeou was as firm as Madame Berryer ; he awed the rioters with threats of punishment, and by the resolution of these two the outbreak was quelled. But it had made a permanent impression on Louis. For some time he had ceased to live in Paris ; he had been gradually withdrawing more and more from all communication with the bulk of his subjects, and even with the municipal officers, or the councillors of the parliament, till none except the court favourites and the ministers had access to him ; and he had begun to feel annoyance at the crowds which flocked round his carriage whenever he crossed the city on his way from Versailles to Compiègne. On such occasions he had always been well received, and hailed with acclamations ; but he now persuaded himself that this attack on his intendant of police proved the existence of a general disaffection, and he caused a new road to be made from Versailles to St. Denis, to save him from the necessity of passing through Paris. It received and long retained the name of the Road of the Revolt ; and, unreasonable as were the fears which had dictated its construction, its existence could hardly fail to recall the recollection of the rapture which his recovery from illness had awakened but six years before in a people among whom he now did not venture to show himself.

Apparently there were moments when Madame de Pompadour feared for the stability of her power. The dauphin, now arrived at manhood, was a prince of decorous and even rigorous propriety, who disdained to disguise the contempt which he felt for her, and the king himself had fits of devout feeling, or, it may be more correct to say, of superstitious dread of death

and the devil, which any fresh illness, such as that of Metz, might turn to her fall. Hitherto she had kept no terms with the priests, because they, looking on her as living in wilful adultery, refused to admit her to the sacraments of the church; while Queen Marie declined to grant her the post of lady of the palace, which she had dared to solicit, on the plea that she could not decently confer such an appointment on a woman who had deserted her husband, and whose character was such that she dared not present herself at the altar: in order, therefore, to place herself on a more secure footing she now conceived an interlude, than which no circumstance could more convincingly prove the hypocrisy and utter irreligion of the chiefs of the Romish church as it existed in France in her day. Her health had been for some time bad; she was afflicted with some disease, painful, and apparently offensive, which made Louis himself keep aloof from her, and she availed herself of this partial separation from the king to represent it to her husband as a proof of her penitence for the wrongs which she had done him, and to beg him to receive her again. "She hoped," she said, "for the future to edify the world by her fidelity to him, as much as she had previously scandalized it by her desertion of him." M. d'Etioles was not left to form his own opinion of the sincerity of the wish thus feelingly expressed; even before he received the letter the Prince de Soubise visited him to give him notice that it was on its road, and to warn him that, though he was left at entire liberty to choose his own course, he would very seriously disoblige the king if he consented to his wife's request; and the intimation was enforced by a royal order, of which the prince was at the same time the bearer, considerably augmenting

the emoluments of his office. The negotiation succeeded perfectly in all its objects. M. d'Etioles was able fully to appreciate the relative value of his wife and of an increase of income, and had too much of the kind of loyalty then fashionable in France to disconcert the plans of his sovereign. He wrote to the marchioness that he pardoned her entirely; that he admired her as much as ever, but that he must decline ever again living with her. She gave all possible publicity to her letter and his reply; and, as it was now clear that her separation from her husband was owing to no fault of hers, the bishops pronounced her a fit recipient of the sacraments of the church; and, fortified by their sanction, the queen, who had given up all hope of recovering the king's affection, and sought occupation and comfort in works of beneficence and charity, no longer refused to appoint her lady of the palace.

But even the accession of dignity and apparent respectability which the mistress derived from the complaisance thus shown to her on all sides did not seem sufficient to ensure her against a change of the king's inclinations: she lived in dread of some rival who might supplant her; and, to secure herself against any influence of that kind, she now conceived and carried out a plan of unprecedented wickedness. Among the estates which at different times she had extorted from her royal lover was a portion of the domain of Versailles, which had been enclosed as a deer park,* and in which a house had been subsequently built for her, and gardens had been laid out with every refinement of costly luxury. She now restored it to Louis, and, drawing on the treasury for

* Le Parc aux Cerfs.

the erection of additional buildings, filled them with female children whose shape and features seemed to hold out a promise of future loveliness. Some were purchased of needy relatives ; more were decoyed or kidnapped : many were barely ten years old. They were educated with great care, Louis himself frequently watching their progress in different accomplishments, and, with strange and unaccountable hypocrisy, superintending their religious studies and exercises of devotion, till they were old enough to become his victims. Then, after a few weeks, or perhaps a few days, they were dismissed with large presents of money, which were augmented if they became mothers. If here and there one seemed more than usually attractive, and likely to awaken in the king more than a passing fancy, the marchioness took care that she was removed at once. During the last twenty years of the reign this infamous harem continued to excite the indignant disgust of all who were not lost to every sense of decency, and a still bitterer feeling among those whose homes had been invaded ; while the contempt and hatred thus aroused against the monarch were, as was not unnatural, gradually extended to the monarchy itself, and were undoubtedly among the causes which facilitated its overthrow.

With such a court, such a king, and such a clergy, it might have been thought that religion was the very last subject that would give rise to disputes. Yet scarcely any of the religious quarrels that had divided the nation since the days of the League exceeded in bitterness those which disquieted the latter portion of this interval of cessation from foreign war ; and perhaps none had been, either in their remote origin or their immediate cause, more discreditable to the ministers of the church, those highest in station being worst in

conduct. By the year 1749 the finances of the kingdom had fallen into a state of greater disorder than ever. To the expenses of a war carried on by land and sea, and even on land sometimes at a distance from the frontier to which the armies of Louis XIV. had never penetrated, were added the demands made on the treasury by the insatiable rapacity and measureless extravagance of the marchioness, and by the prodigality of the king, partly in his newly acquired taste for public buildings and embellishments, and infinitely more in his licentious pleasures. The mistress, who changed the ministers of every department at her pleasure, had lately placed M. Machault at the head of the finance ; and he, being compelled to devise some new tax, felt himself sufficiently strong, as being supported by her favour, to disallow the exemptions which were claimed by different classes, and which curtailed every impost of the larger half of its legitimate produce. He obtained a royal edict, establishing an income-tax of five per cent., and directing that it should be levied on all classes alike. It was certain that so novel a measure would awaken great dissatisfaction. Yet it was very remarkable that the opposition to it came not so much from those who, as holding their estates in perpetuity, were most affected by it, as from those who had but a life interest in their possessions. The lay nobility and great landed proprietors generally acquiesced in its necessity. The Parliament of Paris remonstrated vigorously, professing zeal not so much for their personal interests as for those of the lower classes, the bulk of whom it truly represented as in such a state of hopeless poverty as to be unable to bear any addition to their burdens ; but they yielded to the peremptory command of Louis to register the edict. And the provincial Parliaments,

which had followed its example in remonstrating, followed it likewise in submitting, with the single exception of that of Brittany. The ground of objection taken by that body had been their unwillingness to be disabled by a compulsory tax from offering to their sovereign a voluntary contribution; but the excuse was not admitted without a violent struggle on the part of the crown. The Breton councillors were so fully aware of the importance of their province in the financial system of the state, as being more productive to the revenue and more punctual in its payments than any other, that they felt that they could afford to disregard the anger of either minister or king. They appointed a deputation to carry their remonstrances to the foot of the throne. The minister procured an ordinance forbidding a single councillor to leave Rennes. They adjourned their sitting and quitted the town in a body. They were as little moved by a threat to suppress them altogether, and turned Machault's menace against himself by refusing to reassemble except under condition of not being required to register the edict of taxation. He then tried the humbler tone of entreaty and negotiation, but met with no better success, and the tax was not levied in Brittany.*

But even the Breton Parliament was less fierce in its resistance than the clergy, and not more successful. M. Machault had already curtailed one source of their

* De Tocqueville, who rates Machault's ability very highly, affirms that he proposed to the king an extensive system of general reform, embracing many [all that were necessary] of the great changes made in the Revolution, which Louis might have carried out then "non seulement sans perdre sa couronne, mais en augmentant beaucoup son pouvoir. . . . Mais de telle entreprises ne se conseillent point; on n'est propre à les accomplir que quand on a été capable de les concevoir." — "L'Ancien Régime," 243.

riches by an edict of mortmain, which also prohibited the establishment of fresh religious institutions of any kind, or under any pretext, even as a seminary or as a hospital. And he had also commanded them to furnish a return of all their sources of income, and of its amount. The edict of mortmain they had been unable to resist; but they raised an unanimous outcry against the inquiry into their property, and still more against the subjection of it to a forced taxation, to which some of the bishops even ventured to affirm that they could not submit without a violation of their duty to God. They implored the minister not, by persisting in such a measure, to drive them to the alternative of disobeying either their divine or their earthly king; but the marchioness was by no means inclined to save them from that dilemma, or from any other difficulty. Apparently she rather despised them for their complaisance in the matter of the sacraments; and feeling that, however they might wish to preserve appearances with her, they must secretly be unfriendly to her, was desirous in every measure to abridge their power. Not that her influence was required to strengthen the ministry in their resolution to refuse to continue to the clergy the exemptions which they hitherto enjoyed. The treasury had need of every farthing that could be collected, and of all bodies in the state the clergy were the richest, and, as such, those whose contribution was the most important. Seeing, therefore, the uselessness of argument or supplication, and the impossibility of resisting the tax by force, they sought to divert the blow aimed at them by turning the attention of the court and of the council to other matters, and reviving the old spirit of intolerance. Ever since the beginning of the century ecclesiastical promotion had been entirely

confined to the acceptors of the Bull *Unigenitus*, while the parliaments and the great body of the people, partly no doubt from a spirit of opposition to the clergy, were rather inclined to Jansenism ; and it therefore seemed likely that a renewal of the agitation about the Bull might, for a time at least, throw the new tax, and the resistance to it, alike into the shade.

The natural temperament of their principal leaders, even without such a motive, sufficiently inclined them to such a course. Boyer, Bishop of Mirepoix, who at this time had the disposal of benefices, was a narrow-minded bigot ; Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, was the most imperious and obstinate of mankind : and the measures which they proposed, and those which, when their first proposals were rejected, they endeavoured to carry out by their own power, were not so much the result of worldly craft as the natural fruit of such dispositions, encouraged by their belief in their rights as prelates of the Romish church. They first classed Jansenists, heretics, and Huguenots together as recusants of the Romish discipline, and therefore as infidels. Next they demanded the erection of a tribunal of the Inquisition for their punishment ; and when this demand was rejected, they resolved to take the law into their own hands, and if the Huguenots, as altogether renouncing their jurisdiction, were out of their reach, at least to treat the two former classes as heretics. Beaumont established a regulation that every one who desired to present himself at the altar should produce a certificate from his confessor that he accepted the Bull as an article of faith ; and to those who were not provided with such a testimonial the parochial clergy were enjoined to refuse the sacraments, even if they were on their death-bed. One fanatic priest named Bouettin, who had formerly been

a Jansenist himself, made himself especially conspicuous by the violence and audacity with which he carried out this order. Coffin, principal of the College of Beauvais, was one of the most distinguished classical scholars in France, and had earned a yet more extensive fame by the beauty of his devotional hymns; but he was a Jansenist. At eighty he was sinking into the grave from old age, but he was not allowed the peaceful death-bed which a long life of virtue and piety might seem to have merited. Bouettin forced his way into the chamber where he lay, to reproach him for his heterodoxy, and to threaten him with the denial of the rites of the church if he persisted in it. His vehemence threw the old man into a state of agitation which was fatal to him; and as Bouettin would not relent, he died unanointed and unabsolved. Soon Bouettin flew at higher game in the same spirit, refusing the sacraments to the Duke d'Orleans, whose life of scrupulous devotion offered a pleasing contrast to the infamy of the previous bearers of his title, but who, in the controversy between the followers of Loyola and Jansen, held the same opinion as Coffin; and excommunicating a brother priest of high character because he was attached to the duke's household. The Parliament was not inclined to permit such attacks on the opinions which were held by the majority of their own body. They fined Bouettin for his treatment of Coffin; for his excommunication of the priest they issued an order for his arrest. The king and his mistress grew perplexed and alarmed. The Council of State was divided in opinion; Machault, thinking the present a favorable opportunity to strip the clergy for ever of their most mischievous privileges; D'Argenson, on the other hand, looking with greater apprehension on the measures of the

Parliament, which, in his view, was equally endeavouring to overstep the bounds of its legitimate authority. Louis, who was not destitute of acuteness, was inclined to agree with his minister of war; but the marchioness preferred taking no part decidedly, but confided in her own address to play the contending parties one against the other, and to rely on each to support measures of hostility towards its antagonist. Led by her, Louis first attacked the Parliament, prohibiting them from further deliberations on ecclesiastical subjects, and seizing their registers; a step to which they replied by adjourning altogether, and refusing to perform one part of their functions while debarred from the exercise of the rest. He then turned against the clergy, refused to receive a deputation of the bishops, and banished Beaumont himself. Meanwhile the quarrel was producing a most injurious effect on the people in general, and especially on the Parisians. They were at all times disposed to see things in their ludicrous aspect; and the philosophical school which was now labouring to cover religion with ridicule could have hoped for no more powerful auxiliaries than they found in the conduct of the two sects. Some among the Jansenists excelled as caricaturists; and they filled the print-shops with humorous and stinging pictures of the Jesuits handing over the recusants to the prince of darkness, in which it was often difficult to distinguish the priest from the devil. The Jesuits, if inferior in wit, surpassed their adversaries in anger and in licence, and satirized them in plays and farces, of which the language but little became an ecclesiastical pen, and the scenes could hardly have been conceived by a strictly spiritual imagination. Those who were wholly indifferent to religion, and they unhappily were not the fewest, laughed at both

alike, and insulted both and common decency at the same time with profane and ribald lampoons, which were sung about the streets. But the triflers and satirists who looked on the strife thus raging as a jest, and the politicians who regarded it as a means of which the Crown might avail itself to depress either clergy or Parliament at its pleasure, alike failed to appreciate its real importance ; for now, in the quarrel thus kindled between the lawyers and the church, and in the distrust which both learnt to conceive of the Government, were sown the seeds of the revolution which thirty-five years afterwards overwhelmed both mitre and crown, and for a while prostrated the law itself at the mercy of a ferocious tyranny.*

A temporary and hollow pacification was produced by the birth of that unhappy prince who was destined to be that revolution's victim. In August 1754 a second son was born to the dauphin, who eventually succeeded to the throne as Louis XVI., and the happy occasion of his birth seemed to offer a suitable occasion

* It is a remarkable proof of the sagacity of the celebrated Lord Chesterfield that, at a time when no other person in Europe attached any importance to these disputes, he looked on them as the certain source of great future evils. Writing to his son, in this very year 1753, he recommends him "To attend particularly to the affairs of France: they grow serious, and, in my opinion, will grow more so every day. . . The people are poor, consequently discontented. Those who have religion are divided in their notions of it, which is saying that they hate one another. . . The army must, without doubt, take (in their own minds, at least) different parts in all these disputes. . . Armies, though always the supporters and tools of absolute power for the time being, are always the destroyers of it too by frequently changing the hands in which they think proper to lodge it. . . The French nation reasons freely, which they never did before, upon matters of religion and government, and begin to be *sprejudicati*, to have got rid of their prejudices. The officers do so, too; in short, all the symptoms which I have ever met with in history previous to great changes and revolutions in government, now exist and daily increase in France." It may be doubted whether any political writer or any statesman has ever afforded a more striking specimen of prophetic sagacity.

for all parties to abate something of their vehemence. The aged Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld was endowed with no small portion of the hereditary talent of his family, and with more than their usual sobriety of judgment and moderation. He undertook to mediate between the court and his clerical brethren, though even he could not extort from them an unqualified obedience to their sovereign, who was forced to purchase their abandonment of the Bull as an article of faith by the admission of their right to exemption from taxation; and as, on Boyer's death, which took place a few months later, the cardinal succeeded that prelate as the dispenser of ecclesiastical patronage, he was able to prevent a recurrence of the dispute with the Jansenists by withholding preferment from those who were likely to misuse it, and in many instances conferring it on those who leant to, if they did not entirely profess, Jansenist opinions.

The clergy had failed, as we have seen, to procure the establishment of a special tribunal of Inquisition; but, in some degree to soften this rejection of their petition, the Government enjoined the provincial clergy to show a greater zeal in compelling the Huguenots to bring their children to Catholic baptism; and the governors of some of the southern provinces regarded this instruction as a hint to themselves to renew the persecutions of the last century in all their fierceness. As is often the case, the most pitiless persecutor was he who was the most wholly devoid of religion. The Duke de Richelieu was governor of Languedoc, and, in the same year in which the Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld succeeded in allaying the animosities of the capital, he for a while tore himself from the luxuries of Paris and visited his government for the sole purpose of tormenting the

now scanty band who still clung to the faith of their fathers. Again, as in the days of Louvois, the dragoons were let loose on the hapless villagers and peasantry, while Richelieu offered from his own purse enormous rewards to any one who should apprehend or give information against Protestant ministers; and several of them were put to death, while numbers of men, and even of children, who were accused of having attended their preachings, were hurried off without trial to the galleys. The case of one of the latter attracted particular notice and sympathy. Jean Fabre had been one of a congregation which had been dispersed by an unexpected attack of the soldiery; he had escaped both from their fire and their subsequent pursuit, and was already in safety when he perceived that his father had been less fortunate, and was a prisoner. He returned, and throwing himself at the feet of the commander of the troops, begged that he might be taken as a substitute for the old man. The father was not less disinterested; he, in his turn, besought the officer to reject his son's prayer, and dismiss him in freedom and safety, and for some minutes the two prolonged a generous contest which should suffer, which almost melted the dragoons themselves. The captain was so far softened as to spare the one whom it seemed most natural to pity; he released the father, and carried off the son in his stead, who remained six years a galley slave, till he was released by the personal authority of the Duke de Choiseul.

The obedience of the Parliament and the clergy was not of long duration. A fresh imposition of taxes revived the resistance of both, and it was the more keen since the amount of the property tax of 1756 doubled that formerly levied, while in a still greater degree it increased the unpopularity of the court, as

being more directly traceable to the caprices of the mistress. She had disorganized the whole Government by the frequent changes which she had effected in the composition of the Council of State, out of pure levity and fickleness displacing ministers, and transferring them from one department to another ; and at last, in 1756, she took it upon herself to change the traditional policy of the State, which having been bequeathed to it by Henry IV. had been the cardinal point of the foreign policy of Richelieu, of all the ministers of Louis XIV., and of that king himself, and had been accepted without question or hesitation even in the present reign, when Frederic had regarded it as certain that in any war with Austria he should have the support of France. There had, as we have seen, been one war in which the kingdom had incurred heavy loss from its maintenance of this principle of irreconcilable hostility to the empire, but in every other instance the House of Austria had been the sufferer. Even in the war of 1740, though France had no reason to plume herself on the result as a whole, a French army had taken Prague, and had threatened Vienna, and the recollection of such disasters and disgraces had made the empress-queen and those who chiefly swayed her councils eager to convert so formidable an enemy into a friend.

She was eminently fortunate in having at this moment a servant than whom no one could be better fitted to bring about so great a change in the French system. Count Kaunitz had attracted the notice of the different plenipotentiaries at Aix-la-Chapelle by the skill with which he conducted the negotiations there as the representative of the empire. Being afterwards sent as ambassador to Paris, he had displayed equal address in conciliating the chief personages.

there, however different might be their characters. Mingling diplomatic astuteness and an intimate knowledge of the foreign relations and interests of both nations with dissipation and licentiousness, he had shown himself equally ready to discuss affairs of state with D'Argenson or De Puitsieux, or love intrigues with Richelieu, and had won the favour of the marchioness herself by the graceful gallantry of his ordinary conversation, and the taste with which he assisted at the entertainments and spectacles which occupied her chief attention. In 1753 he was recalled to Vienna to become prime minister, and he soon began to suggest to his royal mistress, the one desire of whose heart he knew to be to recover Silesia and avenge herself on Prussia, that the means by which that aim was to be compassed was by winning over France from the alliance of Frederic. No other statesman in Germany, or perhaps in Europe, would have conceived the possibility of such a diplomatic triumph: but Kaunitz had found his way behind the scenes at Paris; he had discovered that, shameless as the mistress was, she had been stung to the quick by some sarcasms which Frederic had levelled at her profligate habits and at her origin, and he felt confident that any courtesy shown to her by one of her own sex, and especially by one of such unblemished reputation, such worth, such dignity, such royal and notorious pride as his own empress, would suffice to lead her to any line of conduct that might be desired. The chief difficulty which he anticipated was with Maria Teresa herself, and it was not without many apologies that he ventured to suggest to her the expediency of addressing herself to one so infamous; but he found that his scruples had been misplaced. The empress reminded him that to

gain a political object in Spain she had already stooped to flatter the singer Farinelli, and the Spanish throne itself in her eyes would not have been so valuable as Silesia. She at once opened a correspondence with the marchioness, addressing her, as sovereigns style those whom they most delight to honour, by the title of cousin, and inviting her opinion on matters of general policy with apparently the most unreserved and entire confidence. The bait succeeded ; Madame de Pompadour's whole conversation soon turned on her friend the empress ; on their mutual regard and esteem for one another ; and on her own resolution to gratify her friend by the conclusion of a firm alliance between the two countries. The project found but little favour in the Council of State, which feared that such a treaty with the empire must of necessity drive England to combine with Prussia, and once more involve France in a war with the great naval power of the world ; and, on this ground Machault, who had lately exchanged the department of treasurer for that of the marine, argued vehemently and forcibly against the Austrian alliance, but without success.

If, indeed, France had been compelled to ally herself with either, there were not wanting reasons why she should prefer Austria to Prussia, for the last war had shown the utter selfishness of Frederic's policy ; and the faithlessness with which he had made a separate peace the instant that he had attained his own objects, was an unmistakeable warning not again to trust him. The fidelity of Austria to her engagements could certainly be better depended on, and, as Russia, Sweden, and Saxony were all ready to unite with her in her meditated attack on Prussia, whom they hated with all the intensity of fear, there seemed every certainty

that, if a side must be chosen, France was choosing the strongest. The error lay in becoming a party at all in a war in which she could have no possible interest, if indeed the meditated spoliation of Prussia was not prejudicial to her as being calculated to destroy the balance of power, and to bring Russia nearer to the Rhine; and, though Machault's argument, so far as it was founded on the idea that war with England must be a consequence of the alliance with Austria, was invalidated by the probability that in no event could peace be maintained with that power, the occurrences of the last war fully bore out that minister when he contended that a contest with England alone would require all the resources of the kingdom; and that to add to it one with the greatest living general, which Frederic was already admitted to be, was to ensure disasters both by land and sea.

But neither these nor any other considerations had any influence over her who was now mistress of both king and kingdom. Her sole object was the gratification of her own vanity, which was interested in seeming to connect herself with the spotless Maria Teresa, who was, in fact, only making a tool of her; and in arranging the treaty on which she had determined, she employed a man whom she was bent on bringing into notice, as a reward for the attentions which he had paid her in her days of obscurity. When after the death of Madame de Châteauroux she was putting forth all her artifices to attract the notice of the king, M. de Bernis was a young abbé; the clerical profession did not at that time necessarily imply any scrupulousness of virtue, and he, who to noble birth and courtly manners added taste, accomplishments, and no inconsiderable talent as a writer of light poetry, gladly dedicated some of his happiest

efforts to the praises of her whose success he foresaw, and hoped to make a stepping-stone to his own elevation also. He had sought preferment from Fleury, but the old cardinal had reproved him for the amorous warmth of his poetry, and for manners which showed that the licence which he allowed himself was not entirely poetical, and had warned him to expect no promotion from him as long as he lived. "I can wait, my lord," replied De Bernis;* and the good-natured minister, who could bear a jest even on his own age, was pleased with the humour of the answer, though not induced by it to change his resolution. For the cardinal's death the abbé had not had long to wait; but, when he saw that the mistress had become paramount, not only in the palace but also at the council board, he began to direct his own views to something higher than mere professional advancement, and applied himself to the study of politics, and especially of the foreign affairs of the State, of which he soon acquired a knowledge that was really considerable, and which, perhaps, seemed greater than it really was from the contrast which it afforded to the unbusiness-like effusions which had first procured him celebrity.

The marchioness had already allowed him to make an essay of his diplomatic talents in an embassy to Venice, and she now called in his assistance in settling the details of the alliance with Austria, using him, however, rather as a secretary than as an adviser; for, in fact, she herself was the chief negotiator. The imperial ambassador at Paris was Count Stahrenberg, and in the spring of 1756, she, attended by the abbé, gave him almost daily audiences at Babiole, a country-house

* Lacretelle, iii. 162.

which Louis had lately given her near Versailles. At these conferences each separate article of the intended treaty was discussed; and, though they were afterwards submitted to a sub-committee of the Council of State, consisting of Machault, Moreau de Sechelles, who had succeeded him as Minister of Finance, M. de Rouillé, the Foreign Secretary, and the Count de St. Florentin, the Controller of the Royal Household, their debates were a mere matter of form, and they were not permitted to reject or modify a single condition which had been agreed to at Babiolle. There, indeed, De Bernis, in spite of his dependence on the lady's power, had ventured to raise a feeble voice against some clauses which seemed to sacrifice the interests of his country to those of the empire too completely; but his arguments had no weight, and he was overborne by the earnestness of Stahrenberg, to whom the marchioness entirely surrendered herself.* It was a singular proof of the utter incompetency which reigned at this time in the councils of the country, and of the impossibility of common sense making itself heard on the most obvious subjects, that those who were thus planning the destruction of Frederic, thought it easy to throw dust in his eyes, and to keep alive his confidence in the goodwill of France; and accordingly in the spring of this year the Duke de Nivernois was

* Some writers have represented De Bernis himself as the prime mover, on the part of France, of the alliance with Austria, out of revenge for some sneers at his poetry in which Frederic had indulged. But I have preferred the view taken by Lacretelle, partly because the abbé had as yet no official character which could have enabled him to carry out such a design if it had originated with him; and also because his subsequent conduct as minister, when he certainly wished to terminate the war, and was removed by the marchioness for so doing, seems to tally with the account given in the text.—See Lacretelle, iii. 240 (*note*).

sent to Berlin to propose to him a renewal of his alliance with Louis, and a combined attack on the King of England's Hanoverian dominions, and to offer him as an inducement the sovereignty of the island of Tobago. An island on the other side of the Atlantic was not much of a temptation to a sovereign who had not a single ship. Frederic begged the duke to find some more suitable person to be governor of the island of Barataria,* and showed the ambassador a treaty which he had already signed at London with the Court of St. James's.

On the 1st of May, 1766, the treaty between France and Austria was signed at Versailles. It was a one-sided compact. France, indeed, obtained Mons as the price of her friendship; but when Louis guaranteed the inviolability of the empress's dominions in exchange for her guarantee of his territories in Europe, it was obvious that the danger against which she professed to secure him had no existence, since no one threatened any invasion of France; while she had a powerful and encroaching enemy who had already stripped her of one province, and who was highly likely to attack others which remained to her. At first the league was nominally only one for mutual defence; but such a limitation of it was never intended by the Austrian diplomatists to be permanent. Nor did it suit the taste of the French nobles, who, even in their existing state of debasement, had some relics of the old taste for warlike renown, which they associated entirely with achievements on land. Before the autumn, therefore, it was expanded into an offen-

* "Memoirs of Frederic," vol. ii. chap. 3. Barataria was the island of which Sancho Panza was made governor by the duke.

sive and defensive alliance. D'Argenson with zeal applied himself to put the army on a war footing of efficiency, and the nobles began to compete for commands as eagerly as if Frederic needed only to be encountered to be defeated, and the most inexperienced voluptuary of the court were sure to reap honour at his expense.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MACHAULT's warning that the accession of France to the Austrian league against Prussia must inevitably involve her in war with England, was instantly verified by the event. On the 18th of May, as soon as certain intelligence of the treaty at Versailles reached London, George II. declared war against France, and this declaration many look upon as the first overt act of the Seven Years' War; but even before that time warlike operations had been commenced by both countries. Indeed, throughout the whole of the preceding year, the relations between them had been of a feverish and uncertain character. In India, Dupleix, the enterprising Governor of Pondicherry, was diligently labouring to supplant the English settlers in the goodwill of the native princes, and the British Government had sent out a strong squadron under one of their best officers, Admiral Watson, to support their own India Company, by force of arms if necessary. And in America there had been actual collisions both by land and sea. In that region both France and England had settlements bordering on one another, whose frontiers had never been defined with precision. It was quite uncertain how far the British province of Nova Scotia extended; equally so what were the respective boundaries of the French colony of Canada, and the British settlement of New

England; and, as early as 1754, the disputes which inevitably grew out of such a position of affairs had risen to such a height that Captain Jeumonville, a French officer, had been attacked, and, with his whole company defeated and slain, by the English; a British major, whose fame subsequently filled all mouths in the old and new world, George Washington, had been taken prisoner on the Ohio, with four hundred men, by the French; and the next year the English General Braddock, endeavouring to retrieve the fortunes of his country in the same district which had witnessed Washington's disaster, was entrapped into an ambuscade in which he and seven hundred of his men were killed; while, as a set-off to this disgrace, in June, 1755, Admiral Boscawen, with an English fleet of seventeen ships, attacked M. Bois de la Mothe, who, with sixteen ships, was carrying a reinforcement to his countrymen, and captured two sail of the line; and this transaction presents another remarkable illustration of the informal and irregular manner in which war was often waged at this time, especially at a distance from the seat of government. Boscawen had been ordered to attack any French fleet which he might meet. Yet, when the French officers, on coming within hail of him, inquired whether the two countries were at peace or at war, he professed himself unable to answer their question, while in almost the same breath he commanded the attack upon them.

If France did not think the capture of two ships of the line a sufficient reason for declaring war, there was clearly no reason why England should look on it as such. The reduction of some of the French forts on the frontier of Canada and Nova Scotia by the British settlers, aided by some of Boscawen's frigates,

was regarded with equal indifference ; and in Europe the two countries still maintained tranquillity and the appearance of amity till the end of the year, though it was no secret that France was busily preparing for war with some country or other. But at the beginning of 1756 it was seen that her supineness in 1755 had been a mask to cover a design against a recent acquisition of England in the European seas, which it was thought of great importance to wrest from her ; and D'Argenson, with a natural contempt for the English Government of the day, thought that by feigning irresolution and timidity he might find it possible to surprise it before his sovereign's intentions were suspected. He was justified in his opinion of the Duke of Newcastle's Administration. No weaker cabinet had held office since the Revolution, and its weakness had been so reflected in the decay of the public spirit, and even of the national courage, that when first it became generally known in England that France was building ships, and levying troops, a sudden and almost universal panic seized the English people that these preparations were being made for the invasion of their own shores, addresses being even carried in Parliament, imploring the king to bring over troops from Hanover and from Hesse to repel the expected descent. At last, in the spring of 1756, they learnt that England itself was not menaced, but that Minorca was the object of the preparations which had so scared them ; and a force was at once equipped to succour and save the island. It was not, however, the first to reach it. Though no declaration of war had yet been issued, D'Argenson conceived that the hostile acts which in other quarters of the globe had been committed by the forces of both nations on each other, were sufficient to relieve an attack on Minorca, even

without notice, from any imputation of bad faith; and accordingly in April, 1756, a fleet of twelve sail of the line and five frigates, under Admiral de la Galissonnière, escorting an army of sixteen thousand men, under the Duke de Richelieu, quitted the harbour of Toulon. It was reported in Paris that the duke, who had recently displeased the marchioness by showing a disinclination to a match between his heir and her daughter by M. Etioles, had been appointed to this command in the hope that his failure would cover him with disgrace; but, if such was the expectation, however natural it may have been, it was disappointed. Richelieu had certainly no experience whatever in war; but he had courage, and his conduct now and subsequently proved that he had also energy and activity, combined with a shrewd judgment of the feelings of the soldiers, and with skill in acting on them. Moreover, every circumstance of the enemy to be attacked facilitated his enterprise. The island is one of no natural strength; the coast in most parts slopes gently towards the sea, so as to afford a landing place at almost any point; and the garrison, which did not amount to three thousand men, was manifestly inadequate to the defence of the island. The governor was absent on leave in England; the deputy-governor, General Blakeney, was eighty-two years of age, and, though he had been distinguished for both courage and skill in days gone by, was no longer equal to a task requiring such constant activity and ceaseless vigilance as the defence of a besieged fortress. Richelieu therefore met with no opposition whatever. On the 18th he reached the island, disembarked his whole force at Ciudadella on the western side, and at once marched across to Port Mahon; while Blakeney, judging the force at his dis-

posal insufficient for the protection of even a single town, though that town was the capital, abandoned it to him, and confined his efforts to the defence of the castle of St. Philip, which commands both town and harbour. He had already sunk some vessels at the entrance of the harbour to keep De la Galissonnière at a distance, and he had no reason to despair of being able to repel any attack that might be made upon the landward side of the castle; for it had been fortified with all the resources of the engineer's art, with ravelins, redoubts, mines, and galleries, till it was reputed one of the strongest fortresses in Europe. It was well supplied with artillery, ammunition, and provisions; and he had received intelligence that reinforcements were on their way to relieve him.

Richelieu conducted the attack with more vigour than skill. He approached the walls so nearly that his men suffered severe losses from the fire of the garrison, while they were able to make but little impression on the fortifications, which were built in solid rock; and at the end of a month he had made no progress whatever, when, on the 20th of May, a British fleet hove in sight. The arrival of such a force was fraught with hope to the besieged, and with dismay to the besiegers; for it was apparently equal in strength to that of the French Admiral, and the history of the two nations did not afford a single instance of a French fleet encountering an English one of equal strength without defeat. If, as seemed probable, De la Galissonnière should now be driven off, the tables would be at once turned on Richelieu and his army; from being besiegers they would become the besieged; shut in between the fortress and reinforcements which were understood to be on board the English fleet, they would be unable long to resist, and would be cut off

from all hope of escape at any time ; but the duke had a circumstance in his favour on which he could never have calculated. The British Admiral, John Byng, was unequal to the occasion ; though personally brave, he was nervous about responsibility, and he had adopted an idea, the most fatal one that can ever enter into the mind of any commander, that his force was unequal to the duty required of it. Undoubtedly he had cause to complain ; many of his ships were foul* when they left England ; they were so short of hands that the French crews exceeded his by about 2600 men ; and he had been unable to obtain at Gibraltar some stores which were promised to be furnished to him there, and which were greatly needed for any protracted operations. But these defects and hindrances were not such as to have any great influence on a single battle, and there certainly was no reason why Byng should have despaired of the fortunes of his country. However, though he had too much courage to shrink from the encounter with De la Galissonnière, whom he at once attacked, despair he did ; nor, though the first events of the engagement were all in his favour, did they give him the requisite confidence. By a superiority of manœuvres he gained the weather-gage ; and Admiral West, the second in command, who, from the position of his squadron, was the first in action, obtained advantages at the outset which might easily have been rendered decisive, having driven one of the French ships out of the line, and thus thrown their whole order of battle into confusion ; but Byng was not so much encouraged by

* Copper was not used to cover the bottoms of ships till about twenty years later ; and before that time a very short cruise rendered ships so foul as greatly to diminish their speed and handiness.

this success as disheartened by one of his fleet falling foul of another ship, losing her topmast, and compelling the leading vessels of his own division to back their sails to avoid a similar accident; and he presently allowed the French Admiral to draw off without making the slightest effort to continue the action. The next day the two fleets were still close to one another; for De la Galissonière, though the skirmish which had taken place had shown his inferiority in seamanship to his antagonist, could not venture to retreat, since the safety of the army was staked on his maintaining his position; but Byng, instead of renewing his attack, called a council of war. It had already become a proverb that a council of war never fights; and it was never more signally verified than in this instance, when, without any conceivable reason, the English officers unanimously decided that, even if he should succeed in repelling the French fleet, he would be unable to relieve Blakeney. Byng returned to Gibraltar, while Blakeney showed how little ground there had been for the decision at which the admiral and his council had arrived, by still holding out for above five weeks, though he had now no hope of eventual deliverance.

In fact, so well directed as well as resolute were the exertions of the garrison, that Richelieu at last gave up the hope of succeeding by scientific methods, and resolved to try the effect of an assault before his numbers should become too much reduced. To storm such a fortress was not an easy task, for the artillery had wholly failed to make a practicable breach in the walls, which were surrounded by a ditch more than twenty-five feet in depth; but he had the address to represent the storm on which he had resolved as an enterprise which it would be an indulgence to be

allowed to share. His men, discouraged at the obstinacy of the garrison and the severity of their own losses, had begun to seek a solace for their disappointment in intoxication, the one vice which Richelieu seems to have regarded with disfavour; and, though they were delighted at the more vigorous measures which it was now understood were to be adopted, it was hard to wean them from their habits of intemperance, though but newly adopted. Richelieu, however, knew his men; he announced that no one who got drunk should be permitted to join the stormers; and so entirely did feelings of honour and eagerness of distinction overpower all other temptations that from that moment the wine cup was discarded, and all kept themselves in readiness for the moment of action. On the night of the 28th June the duke in person led on his men to the assault; his own son, the Duke de Fronsac, his son-in-law, Count Egmont, marched by his side, each at the head of his company; and the common soldiers, inspired by their dauntless exposure of themselves, vied with one another in ardour. The garrison kept up a ceaseless fire of both cannon and musketry; the stormers' ladders proved far too short, but the men clambered on one another's shoulders, and thus raised themselves sufficiently to reach the top of the battlements with their hands. Many who did so were cut down as they slowly struggled to the top of the parapet, but some made good their footing, and at last the redoubt which had been the object of the assault was won. Had Blakeney been able to entertain hopes of any further attempt being made from England or Gibraltar to relieve him, or had he retained the resolution which had distinguished him in his youth, he would probably even now not have been dismayed by what was only

the loss of a single outwork ; but he was worn out with nine weeks of watching and toil, and he now followed Byng's example and called a council of war, which, as usual, recommended the least bold alternative. By the advice of his officers, though far from being unanimously given, he offered to capitulate, and Richelieu, who had lost above five thousand men since the commencement of the siege, was too glad to grant him the most honorable terms. Blakeney surrendered the fortress, and was conveyed with his garrison, which was hardly diminished by one hundred men, to Gibraltar.

It does not belong to this history to relate the indignation of the British nation and its sovereign against Byng, nor the unjust severity, attributable to George II. himself, and to him alone, with which he was put to death for conduct which even the court-martial which found him guilty attributed only to an error in judgment. But it is remarkable that the conqueror was also received with signal ingratitude by his king. The people in general were almost beside itself with exultation at the war being opened by so important a success, and that achieved over a country at whose expense very few laurels had been gained since first the two nations were pitted against each other. The picture shops were filled with his portraits, the theatres resounded with his name, and the poets, with Voltaire at their head, could find no subject so suitable for songs and odes. But Louis had not a word of commendation for the gallant on whom his mistress had ceased to smile, and his only greeting was a question what the marshal-duke thought of the figs of Minorca. It was a fit retribution for this unroyal coldness that the only other triumph which graced the arms of France throughout the whole war was apparently

owing chiefly to the activity of the same commander.

In the great battles between the Austrians and Prussians, in the defeat of Louis's allies at Lowositz and Prague, and the crushing triumph with which at Kolin they avenged these disasters, the French armies had no share. In the early part of 1757 they were employed in threatening Hanover. In spite of Byng's retreat of the preceding year the French Government had but little hopes of saving its transmarine colonies from the English fleets; but the ministers reckoned that, if they could wrest from King George the continental territory which he was well known to rate far above his British dominions, they should gain an advantage which, on the termination of the war, would enable them to negotiate for peace on an equal footing. An army, splendid in point of numbers and equipment, it was expected would be sufficiently powerful to overbear all resistance, and, as Madame de Pompadour had not forgiven Richelieu, it was placed under the command of the Marshal d'Estrées,* a grandson of Louis the Fourteenth's great war minister, Louvois. It numbered not fewer than eighty thousand men, while the Duke of Cumberland, whom his father had entrusted with the defence of his electorate, had not above fifty thousand men with whom to resist them, and those only German troops from Hanover itself and Hesse, without a single English soldier to support them. In a trivial action at Hastenbeck, a village on the Weser, near Hameln, D'Estrées easily defeated the British prince, but he found it a more difficult task

* Sismondi, iii. 53; Lord Mahon, c. 34. But Lord Mahon makes the singular mistake of supposing Richelieu to be a favourite of Madame de Pompadour, and to have supplanted D'Estrées through her influence.

to keep his own officers in proper subordination; they intrigued against him till they procured his recall, and in the meantime some of the most high-born and profligate ladies of the Court were equally assiduous in putting forward the claims of the conqueror of Minorca to the chief command. The marchioness, who had at all times sufficient prudence to induce her to avoid making unnecessary enemies, especially among those whose influence might be formidable, yielded to a certain extent. She consented to Richelieu superseding D'Estrées in command of the army trusted with the invasion of Hanover; but at the same time she diminished his force, procuring that half of it should be assigned to the Prince de Soubise, a nobleman of high lineage but of no experience in war, and not even of much courage, to whom she allotted the task of penetrating further into Germany, and of encountering Frederic himself.

Richelieu was on his way to assume the command of his division when he heard of the action at Hastenbeck. It did not, in reality, supply any very convincing proof of the capacity of D'Estrées, since the success gained was chiefly attributable to Chevert, the officer who had formerly distinguished himself at Prague, and who, on this occasion, had stormed a redoubt in the centre of the enemy's position, and thrown their line into such disorder that they had no resource but to retreat. It is said, indeed, that D'Estrées was thwarted by the jealousy of the Count de Maillebois, his second in command, whose conduct was subsequently brought before a court of inquiry, and who, though not formally condemned by them, was deprived of his employment, and thrown into prison. But it is certain that he himself was ignorant of the advantage which had been gained by his lieutenant, and,

being dismayed by the advance of the Hereditary Prince of Brunswick, who in another part of the field had captured a few guns and prisoners, was himself on the point of falling back when he saw that the enemy had anticipated him. Still the fact of a decided success having been gained by his army shed such an apparent lustre on his command that Richelieu hesitated, or pretended to hesitate, as to the propriety of proceeding to carry out the orders which he had received by relieving him of his command. He consulted his friend, the Count de Rochambeau, what was the proper course for him to pursue.* "There is but one," was the reply; "you should stop at Cassel, and wait for further orders." The duke shook his head. "All his life," he said, "he had been the victim of propriety;" he pushed on, and took command of the army.

In one way he did not add to his reputation; departing altogether from the system he had pursued at Minorca, where he had maintained a creditable strictness of discipline, he now indulged his soldiers in the most unlimited licence. Some imputed his conduct to a desire to conciliate the men, who were discontented at the recall of D'Estrées, but it was certain that he was not indifferent to the object of enriching himself; a long course of profligacy had impaired his fortune, and he now retrieved it by the most unscrupulous plunder. His very troopers, instead of feeling gratitude for his indulgence, turned him into ridicule, and gave him the name of Father Pillage.† At the same time, however, he pressed

* "Mémoires de Rochambeau," i. 89.

† "Ses propre soldats ne l'appelaient plus que Père la Maraude. Un pavillon élégant qu'il fit bâtir à Paris peu de temps après son retour, reçut le nom de Pavillon d'Hanôvre."—Lacretelle, iii. 307.

with equal vigour the enemy, who retreated before him. The Duke of Cumberland, who had at all times been more distinguished for valour and fortitude than for strategical science, seemed to have been bereft of what little skill he had by his late repulse, and, though after the division of the French army he was equal in numbers to the force in his front, shunned every opportunity of fighting, but continued to fall back before it, till at last he allowed himself to be hemmed in close to Stade, at the mouth of the Elbe, in a position where he could neither retreat further nor fight. He must infallibly have surrendered if Richelieu had not been too anxious to continue his exactions and to secure the plunder which he had already acquired, to be inclined to spare time to attack him; consequently, when the Danish minister, Count Lynar, offered his mediation, it was willingly accepted by both commanders, and, on the 8th of September a convention was signed at Closterséven, by which the British prince agreed to disband his army and return to England. No treaty that ever was signed created such universal dissatisfaction. On the Duke of Cumberland's return to England his father reproached and insulted him before the whole Court. Frederic denounced it as a disgraceful measure on his part, which had completely deranged all his own projects. The Austrians were not better pleased with Richelieu for letting him escape;* and even the

* This, too, was the view taken of it subsequently by Napoleon: "La convention de Closterseven est inexplicable; le Duc de Cumberland était perdu: il était obligé de mettre bas ses armes et de se rendre prisonnier; et il n'était donc possible d'admettre d'autres termes de capitulation que ceux-là."—*Montholon*, v. 213. The Count de Lynar was a crack-brained fanatic, belonging to a sect called Pietists; his views on the subject were expressed to a friend of his, Count Reuss, in a letter which Frederic intercepted, and in which he said: "L'idée qui me vint de faire cette con-

French Government for a time scrupled to ratify the treaty, for the moment that it had been signed Richelieu had marched back into Hanover, where he pillaged the whole country and extorted enormous contributions from the principal towns, a portion of which he devoted to building a splendid palace in Paris, as if his very purpose had been to parade his rapacity, and to give his enemies, who were both numerous and powerful, a handle to decry both his talents and his honesty.

Meantime, while he was plundering Hanover, the Prince de Soubise, with the other division of the army, was loading it and himself with even greater dishonour. On separating from Richelieu he had begun to march towards Saxony, and having been joined by twenty thousand Germans, had sixty thousand men under his orders, when at the beginning of November he learnt that the King of Prussia, who, however, had scarcely more than one-third of his force, was marching to meet him. After the terrible defeat of Kolin, Frederic for a moment so completely gave way to despair that he meditated putting an end to his existence, and though that idea soon gave place to braver resolutions, he was reduced to a still worse condition when, two months afterwards, a Russian force, under Marshal Apraxin, invaded Prussia, and fought a drawn and bloody battle with his general, Lehwald. It was the second week of October, and he had just despatched fifty thousand men to protect Silesia against the Austrian marshal, Daun, retaining but twenty-two

vention était une inspiration céleste. Le Saint Esprit m'a donné la force d'arrêter les armées Français comme autrefois Josué arrêta la soleil. Dieu tout-puissant, qui tient l'univers en ses mains, s'est servi de moi indigne pour épargner ce sang luthérien, ce précieux sang Hanôvrien qui allait être repandu."—"Mémoires de Frédéric : Guerre de Sept Ans," c. vi.

thousand men under his own command, when he heard that Soubise was advancing towards Saxony ; that General Seidlitz, though he had given him a severe check near Gotha, had been forced to retreat before his overwhelming numbers, and that the prince was pursuing him towards Leipsic. He perceived that his own presence was necessary, and hastened with all speed towards that city. He did not loiter there, but pressed on towards the west, keeping nearly the course of the Saale ; and on the 3rd of November he came so near the French outposts that he was able to examine their position, which seemed to him faulty in the extreme ; and that they were able to discover the scantiness of his numbers, which filled Soubise with such confidence that he sent off a courier to Paris with the intelligence that a battle was at hand in which nothing could prevent him from making Frederic and his whole army prisoners. Frederic had intended to fight him on the 4th ; but, when at dawn of day he put his troops in motion for that purpose, he found Soubise had taken up a fresh position, which, though far from favorable for the movements of so large a force, was nevertheless difficult to attack in front with inferior numbers. He fell back, and immediately the French vanguard advanced, their bands playing triumphant airs as if they had already gained the victory. The next morning the prince again changed his ground, and began to manœuvre opposite to the Prussian right, with the object of reaching the village of Merseburg before the king, and thus cutting him off from the Saale. Frederic, however, divined the plan, and put his army also in motion, marching parallel to the allies, along a gentle rising ground which extends to the village of Rosbach. Soubise kept his

attention fixed on the troops which he saw, but did not perceive that Seidlitz, with a division of Prussian cavalry, had been detached along some lower ground to turn his right and fall on the head of his columns while still in line of march. The sun had almost gone down when that officer, one of the most enterprising in the Prussian service, reached the point which his master desired, and began the attack; but the light lasted long enough for the king to gain a complete victory. Two Austrian regiments of cuirassiers stood their ground gallantly for a time; but the French were seized with a panic; those against whom the Prussian cavalry advanced turned their backs without striking a single blow; those who were exposed to the fire of the infantry did not sustain above two or three volleys; and in less than an hour the whole army was in disorderly flight.

A November night was too dark for pursuit; but the French continued their flight by so many different roads that when the next morning Frederic moved forward to make the most of his advantages, he found it difficult to know where to look for the main body. However, he pushed on himself towards Freyburg, and sent detachments in different directions, not one of whom came back without numerous prisoners. Six thousand French and Germans tried to make a stand in Echartsberg; but Frederic sent a single battalion of volunteer infantry, with a squadron of hussars, to alarm them with a night attack. The mere sound of the Prussian trumpets renewed their panic; they fled, leaving behind them four hundred men and ten guns; and the entire trophies of the victory amounted to seven thousand prisoners and sixty-three cannon. About three thousand were killed; while the Prussian loss of all kinds did not reach five hundred men.

Soubise returned to Paris, where he was received with undiminished favour, the king even sending a letter of condolence to meet him on his road, as if his defeat at Rosbach had been an unavoidable misfortune; and appearing wholly insensible to the disgrace it had brought on himself and on the whole nation.

Yet it was not by tranquillity and security at home that he had been rendered indifferent to the vicissitudes and disasters of war. On the contrary, the Government had never been more perplexed by the quarrels between different parties in the State, nor by the concord with which all occasionally united against it. In the course of 1756 the Parliament of Paris resumed its sittings, and the archbishop returned from banishment; but they were hardly both re-established before the old feud broke out with a vehemence increased by the respite it had enjoyed. With the archbishop it was not difficult to deal. Louis sent Richelieu to him with a half conciliatory message, begging him to give peace to the church. Beaumont declared that his conscience would not permit him to temporize; so the king banished him again, appending to the warrant a memorandum that he was to quit Paris that evening or the next morning at the latest; but the Parliament could not be got rid of in so summary a manner. He tried to transfer some of its privileges, and especially that of conveying his orders to the inferior tribunals, to the Council. The Parliament passed a resolution that the Council was a body existing rather by toleration than by any formal and legal institution, and denied its capacity for receiving and exercising the powers with which the king pretended to invest it. The provincial Parliaments identified themselves with the proceedings of their

brethren and leaders, the metropolitan councillors; and the princes of the blood ranged themselves on the same side. Thus powerfully supported, the Parliament next refused registration to some edicts imposing new taxes; and Louis, when reproof more peremptory than usual had proved ineffectual, was compelled to have recourse to a Bed of Justice. For the object in hand, the registration and enforcement of the financial measures of the Government, that expedient, as of old, proved efficacious. But the archbishop, even while in exile, or perhaps because he was in exile, was more vehement than ever in behalf of the ministers of the church. He reasserted in plainer terms than before their absolute independence of all temporal authority; and, when the Pope issued an encyclical letter reducing to very narrow limits the cases in which a priest might be justified in refusing the sacraments to any one who sought them, he denounced the holy father himself as a Jansenist. The Parliament in turn published its condemnation of his intolerance. Between the two Louis was bewildered in a manner absolutely intolerable to one of his irresolution and indolence; and amid the complaints which distress extorted from him he gave vent to expressions which proved him capable of forming a correct estimate of the men around him; of their outward professions; of their real motives; and of the character and tendency of the events which were taking place. Miserable as, he declared, the quarrels between the clergy and the lawyers made him, he could yet see that the clergy were in their hearts faithful to him, while the lawyers wished to reduce him to the state of a puppet; and when one of his courtiers suggested that the royal authority was too securely founded for a few advocates to be able to shake it, "You neither understand,"

replied Louis, "what they are doing, nor what they are aiming at. They are an assembly of republicans."* He foresaw the Revolution; he even believed it nearer at hand than it proved to be, without having the courage to adopt one single measure which might arrest or avert it.

Yet many weeks had not elapsed since he thus expressed his belief of the eventual danger with which the State was threatened from the disposition of the lawyers of the Parliament, before he learnt that there was a spirit abroad, not unconnected with their resistance to his will, which was big with personal danger to himself. Before the end of the year he held another Bed of Justice, at which, to give the clergy, whom he secretly trusted, a preponderance over the lawyers, whom he feared, he enjoined universal submission to the Bull *Unigenitus*, and forbade all discussion of matters which might disturb the public tranquillity; and at the same time he changed the constitution of the Parliament, suppressing some of the chambers and a great number of offices; limiting the occasions on which the Parliament of Paris was to assemble as a deliberative body; abridging the members' rights of voting, and prohibiting, under severe penalties, their ever recurring to their old resource of suspending their judicial functions when dissatisfied with his regulations. The Parliament received these new edicts with a deep discontent, to which, however, they did not dare to give open expression: but the people, who looked up to them as their protectors

* "Mémoires de Madame de Hausset," p. 95. It will be remembered that Burke subsequently traced the revolutionary spirit which actuated the National Assembly in an especial degree to the fact that "a very great proportion of the members was composed of practitioners in the law."
—"Reflections on French Revolution."

against excessive taxation and the intolerant usurpation of the clergy, and who regarded this diminution of their ancient privileges as the punishment of their exertions in the common cause, were less moderate. As the king, on leaving the palace after the Bed of Justice, passed through the streets, murmurs arose which presently swelled into clamour. More than one audacious voice was heard to speak of a tyrant and a tyranny, while the most opprobrious terms were applied to the marchioness. After a day or two the Parliament remonstrated against the edict; a great number of the members tried to drive the king into a compliance with their objections by resigning their offices; while those who shrank from that step as one of positive disobedience, threw themselves on their knees before him in the ardour of their entreaty for a recall of the new statutes. He was moved neither by the obstinacy of the one party, nor by the humility of the other. He met remonstrance and supplication alike by stern reproof and peremptory refusal; and while the councillors were perplexed the people out of doors grew daily more and more indignant.

Within a week of his final rejection of the petition of the Parliament, January, 1757, Louis was passing to his carriage through the hall of Versailles, in which a number of people were assembled to see him pass, when a man stepped forward from the crowd, plunged a knife into his side, and instantly resumed his place. He might easily have escaped, for the hall was badly lighted; but he seemed to be waiting to see the effect of his blow; and the king, who had not lost sight of him, while pressing his hand on the wound, which began to bleed slightly, pointed him out as his assailant. "That is the man who struck me; seize him,

but do him no injury." The king's wound was so trifling, for the weapon with which it had been given was only an ordinary penknife, that to a man as timid as Louis it suggested the idea that the steel must have been poisoned. He took to his bed, and sent Machault to beg the marchioness to quit the palace, as if he hoped to propitiate the Deity, or at least to cheat the devil, by a death-bed abstinence from his favourite sin ; but it was soon seen that no danger of any kind was to be apprehended. Madame de Pompadour returned, and the attention of the capital was wholly concentrated on the examination and punishment of the intended assassin. His name was Robert Francis Damiens. He had been a lacquey in different families of distinction, and had been discharged from almost every employment for acts of petty dishonesty. Though he had been for some time out of place he was not in want, for a considerable sum in gold was found on him ; and, as that circumstance, among others, seemed to indicate that he was acting under the instructions or instigation of others, in spite of the king's prohibition he was cruelly tortured the moment after his apprehension to make him divulge the names of his accomplices. He bore his torments with incredible fortitude, or even with a levity which approached to cheerfulness, often mocking his tormentors with jesting denunciations. Sometimes he declared that Archbishop Beaumont, sometimes that leading councillors of the Parliament, whom he named, were the instigators of his attempt ; at others he threw the blame on a surgeon who had refused to bleed him overnight ; and there were moments when he terrified the very officers who were examining him, by indicating an intention of ascribing to them the suggestion and patronage of his guilty act. Party

spirit ran so high that no denunciation of one body could fail to find support from another. When he claimed the countenance of the Parliament, the Jesuits were in ecstasy ; when he justified himself as having only executed a design suggested to him by the priests, the lawyers triumphantly asked what else could be expected from the disciples of Loyola, and sought to corroborate his statement by an appeal to the notorious principles of the dauphin ; who had zealously embraced their doctrines, and whose reign, therefore, it was easily conceivable that they might prefer to that of his father.

The immediate effect, however, of the attack upon the king had been to improve the understanding between him and his son. On being seized, the first words uttered by the culprit were a warning to take care of the dauphin, and not let him leave the palace for the rest of the day, from which it was concluded that there was on foot a general conspiracy against the whole royal family ; and Louis, moved by his own danger, began to feel kindly towards the prince as a sharer in it. And also, as his terrors for some days incapacitated him from even giving to business the little attention he ordinarily bestowed on it, while they lasted he trusted everything to him.* It was owing to the prince's judicious care to preserve every appearance of formal fairness in the trial of the criminal that it was entrusted to the Parliament, or rather to that portion of it which remained after the recent changes and resignations, with the addition of the princes and the peers. But the procedure,

* "Siècle de Louis XV.," c. 37 ; Lacretelle, iii. 274. "Le roi avait dit, le soir même où il fut assassiné, Je donne tous mes pouvoirs au Dauphin, et je le déclare mon lieutenant."—*Ib.* (*note.*)

whether we regard the enormous length to which it was protracted, or the atrocity of the means employed to learn the truth, did but little credit to the French jurisprudence, which it showed to be in no respect more enlightened in the eighteenth century than in the middle ages. It was opened on the 18th of January, a fortnight after the commission of the act, with great ceremony and pomp in the display of judges, guards, and officials; but it soon appeared that there was no conspiracy to discover. Voltaire, in the account which he subsequently wrote of the whole transaction, summed up Damiens' character in a few words, describing him as a crack-brained fanatic, less wicked than Ravallac or Châtel, but more crazy, and his whole demeanour before the tribunal testifies to the truth of this description. Even the awful position in which he stood, and the terrible fate impending over him, could not sober him into a decent gravity of demeanour. He recognised those of the judges whom he knew by name with a courtesy, which in some instances almost amounted to an assumption of equality. "Good morning, M. Turgot; good morning, M. de Boufflers; I have often waited behind your chairs." He told the old Marshal de Noailles he thought he must be cold in his silk stockings, and he recommended him to move nearer the fire; and he praised the clearness with which Pasquier, as advocate-general, stated the case against him, telling him the king ought to make him chancellor for it. But he did not attempt to make any defence, nor could any coherent explanation of his motives be extracted from him. He did, indeed, offer to make a fuller revelation to the dauphin himself, or perhaps to the judges, if the king would spare his life; and he endeavoured at times to make a merit of not having

given the king a mortal wound, which, as he affirmed, he easily could have done had he desired: and this was true, for his knife, besides the small pen-blade which he had used, had another long-pointed blade like a dagger; and he put forward this circumstance as a proof that his object had been limited to that of giving Louis warning of the danger he was incurring if he continued to damp the hopes of the people by oppressing those whom they regarded as their champions. But neither this extenuation of his intentions, nor the circumstance that there was reason to believe him subject to fits of periodical insanity, was suffered to avail him. After ten weeks of almost constant examination, generally pursued by tortures which it is wonderful that any frame could have supported for such a length of time, he was condemned to the same death as Ravallac, and after his flesh had been torn from his limbs, and the wounds had been filled with boiling oil and molten lead, under the inspection of surgeons who undertook the inhuman and degrading task of watching that life was not extinguished prematurely by the intensity of agony, the lacerated limbs were torn asunder by horses, then were committed to the flames, and the ashes were scattered to the winds, that no remnant might remain, even for the worms, of a man who had lifted his hand against the Lord's anointed. It says little for the delicacy and humanity of Parisian society at that time that many of the ladies of the Court paid a high price for windows which commanded a view of the place of execution, witnessed the multiplied and disgusting barbarities of the executioners, and heard the agonized shrieks of the criminal, without either shrinking or sympathy. Even the relations of the wretched man were not left unpunished; his father, his wife, his

daughter were condemned to perpetual banishment, and his more distant kinsmen were compelled to renounce for ever the name of Damiens.

Two more persons owed their disgrace to the crime thus fearfully chastised, and, unhappily, the country suffered more than they themselves. Machault and D'Argenson, the two ablest members of the council, were deprived of their posts in the ministry. Machault had given the mistress inexpiable offence by being the messenger sent by Louis, in the first frenzy of his alarm, to desire her to quit the palace; D'Argenson had excited the jealousy of Louis himself by the eagerness with which he had seemed to obey the authority of the dauphin while acting as his father's deputy. Exile to their country estates was added to the loss of their offices. Machault's disgrace was softened to him in some degree by a pension which Louis granted him of his own accord; and D'Argenson's, by the appointment of his nephew, the Marquis de Paulmy, to succeed him, who, however, was soon afterwards replaced by the Marshal de Belleisle. M. Moras, who had formerly succeeded Machault at the exchequer, now took his place at the board of marine, but proved wholly destitute of the ability requisite to conduct the duties of so arduous a post in time of war. And the mistress who had plunged the nation into this war had the further responsibility of having caused the dismissal of the only statesmen who were competent to conduct it.

CHAPTER XXIX.

VOLTAIRE remarked that there had never been a war in which the battles had been so numerous as in that now carried on. He was referring mainly to those fought in Germany against Frederic and his generals. But the observation of the shrewd Frenchman was equally applicable to the campaigns between France and England, for never had those countries fought so many actions in so brief a time, nor actions so varied in character, and in the countries which were the scene of them. There were descents on the coast, battles on the open sea, and battles far inland; assaults of fortresses, attacks on islands; and the roar of the cannon was heard more loudly in Asia and America than even in Europe.

We have seen that in her first attacks upon King George, whether on the foreign settlements which belonged to him as King of England, or on the territories, far dearer to his heart, of his Hanoverian electorate, France was fortunate and victorious. Nor was she altogether unsuccessful in repelling some of the attacks which at first the British made upon her own coasts. In the summer of this year the elder Pitt had virtually become the prime minister, and, being eager to signalize his accession to office by some conspicuous exploit, he planned an attack on Rochefort, which a few years earlier had been reported to be

in a most imperfect state of defence. The attempt was probably feasible, but he chose his instruments with singular want of judgment. Among the British admirals, indeed, he could hardly go wrong, and Sir Edward Hawke, whom he selected to command the fleet, was inferior to no one of his predecessors for professional skill or dashing courage; but the general whom he gave Hawke for his colleague, Sir John Mordaunt, had neither valour nor military experience, nor any recommendation on earth but that he was related to a renowned soldier of a former generation, the famous Lord Peterborough. It was almost certain that two such colleagues must quarrel. When no one else, either in fleet or army, saw difficulties, Mordaunt saw nothing else. When Hawke pronounced some of Mordaunt's proposals impracticable at the moment, the general could not be made to comprehend that the very greatest sailors were not independent of wind and tide. At last the general determined to return home, and Hawke had no choice but to escort him to England without having effected anything beyond the demolition of the fortifications of Aix, which were easily repaired, though only to be once more destroyed the next year.

For in 1758 Pitt having learnt that a fleet of men-of-war and provision vessels were being equipped at the same port for the French settlements in North America, resolved to destroy them, and wishing to distract the French Government by the multitude of his attacks, he at the same time sent out expeditions against other parts of the coast; against St. Malo and Havre and Cherbourg. As in the previous year, he made an excellent selection of his naval officers, and as bad a choice as possible of his generals. Hawke, who was again sent against Rochefort, had no military

colleague; he drove ashore all the French ships except one, which he captured, and battered down the new fortifications. But Commodore Howe, who was despatched to attack the northern harbours, was encumbered first with the Duke of Marlborough, and afterwards with General Bligh. He made two expeditions; in the first he destroyed a great quantity of warlike stores at St. Malo, and several men-of-war which were building there; but the duke, though he had fourteen thousand men under his command, considered the town itself too strong to be attacked, and pronounced the same opinion of Havre. In the second expedition General Bligh, who had relieved him, destroyed Cherbourg without meeting any resistance; but, when he proceeded to the attack of St. Malo, his incompetency brought as great discredit on the army as the timidity of the duke, and greater disaster. For the disembarkation of his troops he selected a little cove to the eastward of the town, known as Lunaire Bay, a spot where a chain of rocks prevented the fleet from co-operating with them, and where the river Rance lay between them and the town. The difficulties on that side proved so insuperable that it became requisite for both army and fleet to move round to St. Cast, a village a few miles to the westward, and in the meantime some battalions of Breton militia, with about a thousand regular cavalry, were collected to attack the English and cut off their retreat. Bligh never thought of fighting, but at once hastened to the shore to re-embark; luckily for him the Duke d'Aiguillon, the governor of Brittany, was as little inclined for desperate measures as himself. He took up his own position on the top of a windmill, from which post of safety he issued orders to his subalterns, and thus so much time

was lost that all the English but a rear-guard of fifteen hundred men had reached the boats before it was attacked. The rear-guard, under General Drury, fought bravely, but was overpowered by numbers; nearly four hundred were killed, and above five hundred fell into the hands of the French as prisoners.

A century afterwards the French Government erected a monument on the spot to commemorate the repulse of the English, but at the time it passed almost unobserved; yet it might have been rescued from its temporary oblivion by the circumstance that, slight and unimportant as the triumph was, it was the only one gained in the year, and was the very last which shed any kind of lustre on the French arms to the end of the war. On the Rhine the same summer added another disaster to that of Rosbach, and the next season was fated to crown that defeat with one almost as shameful and still more severe. There were not wanting prudent councillors who would have saved the nation from these calamities, and, perhaps, even from the disgrace of Rosbach. In June 1757 M. de Rouillé, the foreign secretary, died, and was succeeded by the Abbé de Bernis, who, from the investigations imposed on him by his new office, soon discerned the emptiness of the treasury, the impossibility of defending the colonies against England, in short, the utter inadequacy of the existing resources of the country to such a war as that in which it was now engaged; and after the successful invasion of Hanover, and the convention of Closterseven, earnestly urged the marchioness to let the king avail himself of the vantage ground on which these successes had placed him to withdraw from the war with credit, and to allow him to open a negotiation for peace with England. He only sealed his own political ruin.

Madame de Pompadour's desire to avenge herself for Frederic's continued jests at her expense, and to reward the empress-queen for her condescension in corresponding with her, was yet unabated. She dismissed De Bernis, replaced him by the Duke de Choiseul, and reinforced the army in Hanover, from which, however, Richelieu was recalled, and which was now entrusted to a prince of the blood royal, the great-grandson of the great Condé, the Count de Clermont, Abbé of St. Germain, who in the preceding war had obtained a dispensation from the Pope to unite the military to the sacerdotal character, and in the campaign of 1743 and 1744 had shown considerable personal gallantry, though but very ordinary science. He had need of eminent skill, for he had eighty thousand men to manœuvre, and he was opposed by one of Frederic's ablest lieutenants, Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, who, at King George's express solicitation, had been lent to him for the command of his Hanoverian troops on the Duke of Cumberland's return to England.

Had the French army been all effective, it would not have been too large for the extent of ground it had to cover; but the relaxation of discipline which Richelieu had permitted had greatly weakened it. A short time after Clermont had taken the command, he wrote the king a letter in which he divided it into three classes: one-third of his men, he said, were ragged thieves, living as they could, and clothing themselves by the pillage of the country; another third were in the hospital; the remainder were in their graves. And he requested orders whether he should at once bring back the first division, or wait till it rejoined one body or other of its comrades. There was so little exaggeration in this description that, though Prince Fer-

dinand's army amounted only to thirty thousand men, the French fit for service did not outnumber him by above five thousand; and, trusting to his rapidity of movement to counterbalance so trifling a disparity, the prince, in the spring of 1758, put his troops in motion, cut off Clermont's communications, drove him from Hanover across the Weser, and then across the Rhine, making prisoners of many thousand invalids who were unable to bear so rapid a retreat; and in the last week of June attacked him at Crefeld, between Dusseldorf and Venloo. Clermont would have retreated further still had he not allowed himself to be overruled by the remonstrances of Belleisle's son, the Count de Gisors, who represented to him that the woody character of the ground which formed his position gave him advantages for repelling an attack which could not be found in any other spot east of the Meuse. The correctness of his judgment seemed proved by the stoutness of the resistance with which the army for many hours resisted all the assaults of the Germans, till at last Gisors fell at the head of his men; and when he was down no one was left to encourage them. Clermont only waited to give orders for a general retreat, and then setting spurs to his horse, led the flight from the field to Neus. "Have any great number of my runaways fled this way?" was the question he put to the burgomaster. "You are the very first, my lord," was the answer.

He was not called on to avail himself any more of the Pope's dispensation. The Marshal de Contades was sent from Paris to take his place, who, if possessed of a firmer courage, showed but little more capacity; though it must be allowed that many of the faults of the army were traceable to a vicious system at head-quarters. So numerous had the officers

gradually become that, if they were employed in turn, it was impossible for any to serve long enough to acquire sufficient experience; the bulk of them, too, were very poor, while the irregularity with which their pay and that of the common soldiers was distributed, almost compelled the men to plunder and the officers to connive at it. De Contades, however, was furnished with strong reinforcements; and the Prince de Soubise, who had also had his ranks recruited since Rosbach, was ordered to return into Hesse and Hanover, and retrieve his credit by the devastation of those districts. At the head of fifty thousand men he obeyed his orders with unshrinking cruelty; but in one or two actions which, though of no great importance, were stubbornly contested, he displayed sufficient steadiness to show that it was not cowardice so much as presumption which had caused his disgraceful defeat of the previous year; and as in one instance he beat a body of twenty thousand men under General Obery, the king treated his exploit as of a magnitude to efface all less happy recollections, and sent him a marshal's truncheon as its reward.

He returned to Paris to enjoy pleasures more suited to his inclinations than those of a campaign, and left his army under the command of the Duke de Broglie, to whom the opinion of the army in general ascribed the chief credit of its recent successes. And the first operations of 1759 seemed to show that that belief might not be entirely destitute of foundation. Prince Ferdinand had been largely reinforced in the winter with several bodies of troops, and, among others, with twelve thousand British soldiers under Lord George Sackville; and, thinking himself sufficiently strong to make head against both the French armies, he left half his force to watch De Contades in Westphalia,

while with the other half he himself marched to the southward to deliver Frankfort-on-the-Maine from De Broglie, who had treacherously availed himself of the confidence of the magistrates, in granting him a free passage through the town, to make himself master of it. De Broglie had sufficiently early intelligence of his approach to take up a strong position at Berghem to encounter him; and, having slightly superior numbers, on the 13th of April repulsed him with considerable slaughter, capturing some guns also as permanent trophies of his victory.

The prince was forced to retrace his steps and reunite his army; and as De Broglie, who had displayed great tactical skill in the late battle, was pursuing him on one side, while De Contades was descending towards him on the other, he soon found himself in a position of great danger. De Broglie, as he pushed on, took Cassel, Munster, and Minden, and in the last days of July effected his junction with Contades. Their two armies amounted to nearly seventy thousand men. That of the prince was weaker by seven or eight thousand; but he had no hope of receiving any reinforcement, while he had reason to believe that fresh troops were on their way to join the marshals. Yet since no triumph in any other quarter would make amends to King George for any injury to Hanover, he felt bound to maintain himself in that district, and therefore an early battle was indispensable to him. He could hardly attack the French, whose superiority of number was rendered the more formidable by an unusually strong position close to Minden, behind a deep and extensive marsh; but though he had learnt to respect the ability and judgment of De Broglie, he was aware that De Contades was the senior officer, and, not esteeming his skill so

highly, thought it might be possible to tempt him from his ground. His own camp was on the banks of the Weser, and on the afternoon of the 30th of July he quitted it in broad daylight, leaving behind a single division of five thousand men, apparently to keep open his communication with the river. On seeing this movement, the French commander-in-chief looked on the troops thus separated from their comrades as an easy prey, and on the morning of the 1st of August put his army in motion to cut them off. Descending from his unassailable position, he crossed the marsh, sending De Broglie forward to strike the intended blow with his division; but that officer, on surmounting a small rising ground, found the whole Prussian and English army drawn up in order of battle behind it, and between the marsh and the Weser. During the preceding night Ferdinand had retraced his steps, without the slightest intelligence of such a manœuvre having reached the hostile camp, and was now only waiting till the French should show themselves to take advantage of their surprise. The marshals might still have regained their old position; but both felt ashamed to retreat before an inferior enemy, and, accordingly, on De Broglie's sending him word of the apparent resolution of the allies to fight, De Contades hastened to the front, and gave the word for an instant attack. But the features of the ground which had been the strength of his former position were now embarrassments; the marsh which had then protected his front now being on his side narrowed the field, so as to prevent his deriving full advantage from his superior numbers, and also so as to compel him to keep his cavalry in the centre, and to post his infantry on the flanks. In the allied army the British contingent of infantry, with a few Hanoverian regiments, formed the centre and the left wing; the

cavalry, both English and German, being placed under Lord George Sackville, and held back on the right as a reserve. It was between the British infantry and the cavalry, still the main reliance of a French army, that the chief struggle took place. The officers of that splendid brigade were still drawn from the high-born nobles who, whatever their other vices might be, had not degenerated from the bravery of their ancestors, and they dashed furiously with repeated charges against the British, who never gave an inch of ground, while their steady and ceaseless fire rapidly thinned the ranks of their assailants.* At last they could no longer be brought up to the attack, and the whole army began to retreat. Prince Ferdinand saw that the time had arrived for him to become the assailant in his turn, and sent orders to Lord George to charge the wavering battalions with the cavalry. Lord George had it in his power to change the retreat into a rout, and he saw the importance of the movement, for he was a man of quick apprehension and great military skill; but he refused to stir. He was jealous of the prince, and resolved to mar his victory. Aide-de-camp after aide-de-camp brought him a repetition of the order. He professed to think that they must have mistaken the prince's meaning, and still refused to move a man. The English officers were furious; they saw an opportunity for gaining such renown as had not been within their reach since the days of Marlborough, and some of them gave vent in plain language to their dissatisfaction. Another Eng-

* This is the testimony of the French historians: "La fermeté des Anglais contre ces charges répétées de cavalerie décida le gain de la bataille. Les escadrons français se fondirent devant leur feu roulant," &c.—Sismondi, viii. 53.

lish nobleman, Lord Granby, commanded the second line, and to him at last the prince sent the same order that he had so often sent ineffectually to his chief. Without a moment's delay, Granby charged with all the men under his own command. But precious time had been lost; the French had gained ground where they were better able to resist, and had not the prince early in the day detached a division under the Hereditary Prince of Brunswick to occupy the passes in their rear, they would have escaped with comparatively trifling loss. But this judicious and bold step compelled them to continue their retreat in hasty disorder, and they scarcely halted till they reached Cassel.

They had left behind many guns, many colours, many prisoners. The total loss sustained by them in the battle exceeded eight thousand men; and in the subsequent operations, while they continued their retreat, and Prince Ferdinand persevered in his advance, he also captured their military chest, most of their baggage, and their official papers. Among the last he found some instructions from Belleisle to De Contades, which proved that, if the French had forgotten their military skill, they had not renounced the cruelty of their military system. The marshal was enjoined to rely on the resources of the country in which he was operating for supplies of all kinds; to disregard all pleas of neutrality, and "to destroy everything which he could not consume, so as to make a desert of all Westphalia."* The despatches were sent to England and published by the English ministry; but by this time the French Government had become so general an object of contempt that no such revelations could lower it in the estimation of

* The whole despatch is quoted by Smollett, book iii. c. 12.

other countries; and the commanders themselves were fully occupied in quarrels with one another. The faithfulness with which they had executed Belleisle's orders proved highly injurious to their own army now that it had to march through the country which it had desolated. At each step it sustained fresh losses. De Contades and De Broglie began to reproach each other for their difficulties, and for the loss of the battle which had led to them; and each wrote letters to the court full of complaints of his colleague. The marchioness took part with De Broglie, probably because the empress-queen had already extolled and rewarded his achievement at Berghem by creating him a prince of the empire; and, recalling De Contades, left him in undivided authority. Two years later De Broglie quarrelled with Soubise, though then his fortune was reversed. The dispute was nominally referred to the Council of State; but Madame de Pompadour again took upon herself to decide it; and though she had preferred De Broglie to De Contades, she preferred Soubise to him. He in his turn was now superseded in his command, and banished to his estate. But by this time the court and the mistress had become so unpopular that to be out of favour in that quarter was a sure passport to general popularity; and, as it happened that on the evening of the day when this sentence had been pronounced on De Broglie, "Tancredi" was played at the theatre, at the two lines—

"On dépouille Tancrède, on l'exile, on l'outrage;
C'est le sort d'un héros d'être persécuté,"

the whole audience burst out in acclamations of assent, applying them to him; and he gained more general goodwill now from the lady's displeasure than

had formerly flowed to him either from his own exploits and skill or from her patronage. But Soubise had no opportunity of doing any harm. The battle of Minden was the last important transaction in that part of Europe; and, though Louis kept enormous armies, seldom amounting to less than 150,000 men, on foot in the countries between the Rhine and the Weser, till the peace, their operations were confined to one or two sieges and skirmishes of no magnitude, and had no influence on the progress of the war beyond the diversion which they effected in favour of Frederic's enemies on the eastern side of Germany, by compelling him to keep Prince Ferdinand and his army in Westphalia to oppose them.

One enterprise of the French army, however, deserves to be recorded, not so much for its intrinsic importance, though indeed it was highly successful, as for the heroic self-devotion of the Chevalier d'Assas, who saved it from failure at the cost of his own life. In the autumn of 1760, De Broglie had discovered or divined that the Prince of Brunswick was meditating the siege of Wesel, and, as the capture of that town would have made the enemy master of the Lower Rhine, the marshal detached the Marquis de Castries with 25,000 men to save it. He marched with such speed that he reached Clostercamp, in the immediate neighbourhood of Wesel, before the prince had completed his preparations, and took up a strong position, from which it was clear that the prince must either dislodge him or abandon his design. D'Assas was a captain of the French regiment of Auvergne, and on the night of the 15th of October was on outpost duty; he himself had strolled out in advance of his men, when he was suddenly surrounded by an armed band, who, putting their muskets to his head, threatened

him with instant death if he gave the alarm. They were part of the advanced guard of the Prussian army, for the prince having found the French position too strong to be carried by open assault, was endeavouring to surprise it by a night attack, and was now moving up with his whole force to fall on it under cover of the darkness. D'Assas saw that he had to choose between his own safety and that of De Castries and his army. But he did not hesitate for a moment; at the utmost pitch of his voice he shouted to his picket that the enemy were upon him, and was bayoneted to death almost before he had finished his outcry. But his comrades sprang to their arms, beat back the Germans, and the army and Wesel were thus saved by the self-sacrificing patriotism of one man. The foes whose schemes he had baffled paid a cordial tribute of praise to his memory, Prince Ferdinand himself expressing publicly his sorrow at not having been able to save the life of one whose gallantry shed honour on every brother soldier. But the worthless monarch in whose cause he died had no attention to spare for deeds of virtue such as his. The national Gazette took no notice of his exploit, and even misspelt his name in the list of the slain. He was not, however, suffered to perish wholly unforgotten and unrewarded. Some years afterwards, one of his brother officers related the circumstances of his fall to Voltaire, who gladly gave it a prominent place in his history of a reign which presented so few honorable events to record; and when, a few years afterwards, a sovereign more keenly alive to every noble sentiment and action was seated on the throne, such reward of his unsurpassed self-devotion as could be found in heaping honour and emoluments on his relatives was eagerly bestowed. It happened that, in the course of an evening's con-

versation, in the apartments of Marie Antoinette, allusion was made to the devotion of D'Assas to his comrades and his country, and to his glorious death. All extolled it, but on none did it make such an impression as on the queen ; and when her instant inquiry what relations he had left behind him, and what had been done for them, elicited the fact that he had a brother alive who, like him, had been a soldier, and two nephews who, one in the army and one in the fleet, were still in the service of their country, she rested not till she had brought them under the notice of her husband. The young men were promoted ; their father was complimented by the addition of Clostercamp to his name, to immortalize the memory of his kinsman's exploit, and a perpetual pension of a thousand livres was conferred on all successive representatives of the family. It is paid to this day. For a time, indeed, it was suspended while France was under the rule of the rapacious and soulless murderers of the king who had granted it ; but Napoleon restored it, and amid all the changes that have since taken place in the government of the country, every succeeding ruler has felt it a matter both of honour and policy to recognise the claims that patriotic virtue such as that of D'Assas retains for ever on the country.*

The events of the war with England were those which alone affected the grandeur and welfare of France, and they assumed a daily increasing importance. Machault had left the navy in a state of high efficiency, and the Duke de Choiseul, in concert

* See " Louis XVI., Marie Antoinette, et Madame Elisabeth ; Lettres, &c. par M. Feuillet de Conches ;" Letter 66 of Louis XVI., date 11 Sept. 1777 ; and *note*.

with Belleisle, now projected a plan of which more than forty years afterwards Napoleon himself did not disdain to borrow the leading features. A fleet of fourteen sail was equipped under Admiral de la Clue, at Toulon, another of twenty-five sail under the Marquis de Conflans at Brest, and a squadron of five frigates under M. Thurot at Dunkirk; while at Vannes, Havre, and Dunkirk, three armies, numbering in all above 100,000 men, were collected at the same time, and it was intended that when all was ready De la Clue should issue forth from the Mediterranean, should be joined by Conflans off Ushant, and that when the two commanders had with their united force swept the Channel of any English fleet that might be met with, they should escort the armies to a simultaneous invasion of England, Scotland, and Ireland, which as Choiseul and Belleisle imagined could hardly fail to be successful. The calculation was so far sound, that certainly if such large bodies of enemies could have landed on the British shores they would have found no army equal to an encounter with them; but it greatly erred in underrating the difficulty of conveying them to their destination. The plan was not kept so secret but that intelligence of it reached Pitt, whose genius for the conception of a campaign was as enterprising as that of the French ministers, and far more prudent and comprehensive; while the resources of England, if unable to muster 100,000 soldiers at a moment's notice, were able to furnish forth fleets and admirals more than sufficient to confront the French ships, either in their own or in British waters. Admiral Boscawen was appointed to watch De la Clue, with a force equal in number, but rather superior in weight of metal; Hawke was placed at the head of another fleet, quite able to take

care of Conflans; Commodore Boys had Thurot entrusted to his vigilance; and neither officer failed in realizing the expectations formed of him. De la Clue succeeded, indeed, in passing the Straits of Gibraltar; but Boscawen, who was carefully watching him, came up with him off Lagos, and captured or destroyed four of his largest vessels; Conflans, sailing down the Bay of Biscay, was caught by Hawke off Quiberon, and some of his ships, his own flagship, the *Soleil Royal*, among the number, were taken; some were sunk, some burnt, some were run ashore and destroyed by their own crews, and of his whole fleet only three were ever again serviceable. Thurot, who had taken advantage of a gale which drove Boys off the coast, was forced to seek refuge from his pursuit in the Baltic. The next year, having rounded the Scotch coast and reached Ireland, he fell in with another British officer, Captain Elliot, and after a severe action he himself was killed and all his ships were taken. And besides the three British thus matched against three French squadrons, Pitt equipped a fourth under the command of George Rodney, who, though then the youngest admiral in the service, was destined to earn himself a fame such as up to his time no sailor had ever equalled, and which to this day but one has ever surpassed. Rodney's task was to remind the Government which was thus menacing his country with invasion that their own shores were not safe. With five sail of the line of the smallest class, and a few frigates and bomb-vessels, he in July anchored in the roads of Havre, the harbour from which the principal invading army was intended to sail, and which consequently was full of stores, transports, and flat-bottomed boats. He burnt the magazines, and every vessel of every description, and, by the confession of

the French officers, had the town itself equally at his mercy. That, however, from regard for the peaceful inhabitants, he spared; but he had completely destroyed the place as an arsenal for ships-of-war, and had shown perhaps even more strikingly than his brother officers how completely England was mistress of the seas, and how little, so long as she continued to be such, she was in danger from any attempt at foreign invasion.

These disasters, the French efforts having failed to find any point where England was vulnerable, were alone sufficient to show the insane impolicy of the war into which the mistress had thus plunged the country. But France was about to learn the lesson still more painfully by the loss of valuable territories. Before he defeated De la Clue in Europe, Boscawen, acting in combination with Lord Amherst, and an army of twelve thousand men, had in 1758 taken Cape Breton, whose garrison, valiant and well commanded as it was, only reached half Amherst's numbers. And the next year, at the same time that Hawke and his comrades were protecting their own shores, the minister who allotted that duty to them could still provide other forces to act not on the defensive, but on the offensive; and sent one combined expedition against the West Indian possessions of France, which took Guadaloupe, and gradually subdued the adjacent islands; and another against the chief French settlement in America, the extensive province of Canada. It was governed by one of the most virtuous and most able of the French military nobles, the Marquis de Montcalm, who in 1758, with only four thousand men, had defeated General Abercrombie with four times his numbers, in an attack upon Ticonderoga, a fort at the foot of Lake Champlain; and this repulse only in-

creased Pitt's resolution to subdue the whole territory. It was no trifling or easy enterprise, for the French settlers amounted to sixty thousand men, few of whom were altogether unfamiliar with war. They had two large and fortified towns, Quebec and Montreal, with many detached forts, and Montcalm, by a humane and conciliatory policy, had so won over the native Indians that the greater part of their tribes were his firm allies.

Against this great colony Pitt, who liked to distract his enemy by the multiplicity of his attacks, planned three expeditions. He sent Amherst with the army that had taken Cape Breton, against Ticonderoga, the scene of Abercrombie's disgrace in the preceding year; with another force General Prideaux was to reduce a strong fort close to the falls of Niagara, and bearing the same name as that celebrated cataract; while a third army, eight thousand strong, was placed under the command of General James Wolfe, who, though a young man, had more than once shown a spirit of singular daring, and who was now to be escorted up the St. Lawrence by a fleet under Admiral Saunders, one of the best officers in the British service, that he might attack Quebec itself, Pitt calculating that Amherst would take Ticonderoga in time to co-operate with him. Niagara was taken, though Prideaux himself was killed. Ticonderoga, too, was abandoned by the French garrison; but they had so many other strongholds in the district, and so formidable a force of small vessels on Lake Champlain, that Amherst could not venture to penetrate into Canada till he had also built a fleet, and obtained the mastery of the lake. Wolfe, therefore, had to rely on his own troops alone, with such aid as the admiral could afford

him ; but at first Saunders's exertions seemed more likely to lead to the destruction of his own fleet than to the support of the army. On the 27th of June he landed Wolfe and his men on a large island in the St. Lawrence close to Quebec, known as the Island of Orleans, and then anchored his ships on the southern side of the island to keep it between them and the city batteries. Montcalm at first tried to dislodge him with fireships, but Saunders had been forewarned of his design, and repelled them, and the brave marquis from this time forth concentrated his whole attention on the army. He himself had about ten thousand men under his orders, and with them he encamped without the city on what he judged to be its most assailable side, disregarding every attempt of Wolfe to lure him from it. In a few skirmishes which from time to time took place he usually got the better through the admirable skill of the native Indians as riflemen, and on one occasion, when the British general ventured to attack his position in force, he repelled him with severe loss. All Wolfe's officers now despaired of success ; anxiety threw him into a fever. Nor was he the only invalid in his army, which, in the course of the last three months, from one cause and another had been reduced to little more than half its original numbers. Fresh endeavours to tempt Montcalm from his vantage ground were all profitless. Wolfe began to despair of success, and only kept his ground in order to prevent Montcalm from detaching men against Amherst ; when in the second week of September, while reconnoitring the French position for the last time, he perceived a path winding up the cliff from the bank of the river, so narrow that scarcely two men could mount it abreast, so steep that had it not been for the coppice-wood and brambles

with which it was fringed, and often apparently blocked up, but which afforded a support for the hands of the climbers, it would have been almost impossible to ascend it at all. He was not aware that the French had cut trenches across it in several places, and altogether broken it up at the top, but he conceived the idea that, though it was impossible to advance against Montcalm by the ordinary roads without destruction, it might be possible to surprise this path, and thus to get on equal terms with his enemy.

His exploit is one which all nations have agreed in judging of by the event. It was a bold and original design boldly and skilfully carried out, which, had it failed, would have been condemned as one of hopeless rashness. To aid it the admiral set his squadrons in motion to make demonstrations at different points; while Wolfe embarked his soldiers in boats, and, crossing the river, landed on its northern bank at the foot of the Heights of Abraham, as the hill occupied by the French was named. It was scarcely two hours after midnight on the 12th of September, and still almost pitch dark, when the first British soldiers began to feel their way up. A guard of 150 men was stationed at the summit, but their watch was not very vigilant, for, in its best state, it had never occurred to any one that the path was practicable for more than a mere handful of men at the outside. The precautions taken to damage it increased their confidence, and they looked on their post as a matter of form rather than one which could be of any possible use; accordingly the leading files of the British army, Wolfe himself being among them, were close upon the sentries before their advance was discovered, and though then the sentries began an irregular fire down

the cliff, they had no light to guide their aim, and they were soon driven in. Company after company of the British reached the top, till at last Wolfe was able to marshal his whole army on level ground.

Yet even now that he had thus succeeded in the first part of his enterprise, whether the progress he had made would turn to his triumph or his destruction, depended rather on his enemy than himself. His army had been so greatly reduced by losses in the field, by want and disease, that the whole force which he now had with him fell short of 6000 men, and it was impossible that he should receive any reinforcement; while, though a considerable part of Montcalm's battalions were absent on detachment, a single day would suffice to recall them all, and Wolfe would have to encounter nearly treble his own numbers. Luckily for him Montcalm, who was astonished beyond measure when on the morning of the 13th he saw the enemy in his front, was surprised out of his prudence. He saw that, even while confined to the troops whom he had actually with him, he was superior in numbers; he recollected that it was not long since, with a force vastly inferior, he had routed Abercrombie, and he disdained now to wait for further strength. He decided on an instant attack, affirming to those around him that he must fight, but that he should overwhelm the enemy; and at first his boast seemed likely to be verified, for, as he advanced, he threw out a cloud of sharpshooters, whose rapid and well-directed fire threw the advanced guard of the English into confusion. But Wolfe saw that the action could only be decided at close quarters, and bade his men reserve their fire till the French should be within forty yards of their muskets; then they delivered it in one crushing volley, which was

almost decisive of the fate of the day. So many were struck down that their comrades wavered, and Wolfe, seizing the moment with a general's eye, instantly charged them before they could recover from their hesitation, and broke them at every point. He was not spared to enjoy or even to complete his triumph. One of the first shots fired by the sharpshooters had struck him on the wrist, and now as he led on his men two more balls pierced his groin and his chest, and he was borne dying to the rear. Montcalm had been mortally wounded a short time before. But the rout was so complete that the death of the English general did not check his men, nor could the French commander, if he had survived, have rallied his to retrieve it. The Chevalier de Levis and Brigadier-General Townsend succeeded to the chief commands; but the French troops, though still superior in number to the English, were so demoralized by their recent defeat that De Levis had no resource but to surrender Quebec. Five days after the battle he signed a capitulation, and, while Townsend took possession of the city, a trophy which stamped the British victory with a character of first-rate importance, he retired to Montreal.

The next year he made a vigorous effort to restore the fortunes of his country. The Marquis de Vaudreuil, who had succeeded Montcalm as governor of the province, and who had also taken up his headquarters at Montreal, gave him ten thousand men for the recovery of the capital; and with them he defeated the British commandant, General Murray, in a battle in the open field; and having opened trenches against Quebec, began to conceive great hopes of retaking it, when an English squadron arrived in the St. Lawrence, which drove off the vessels that

had brought him and his army from Montreal, and so powerfully reinforced the garrison, that he had more reason to dread being hemmed in himself than any longer to expect to gain any advantage over his conquerors of the previous year. Even to secure the safe retreat of his men he was forced to abandon his baggage and artillery; and though by this sacrifice he was enabled to rejoin the governor, they were unable to preserve Montreal or any portion of the colony. Amherst was moving against Montreal from Ontario, while a squadron of small vessels was working up the St. Lawrence from the fleet; and intelligence soon reached De Vaudreuil that a squadron, laden with supplies from France, had been captured at the mouth of the river by the English Commodore Byron. The marquis and M. Levis were both brave men, but they saw that any attempt to resist such forces as now surrounded them could only lead to an useless sacrifice of the men under their orders. In September 1760, a few days before the anniversary of the fall of Quebec, they capitulated, on condition of being conveyed to their own country, and the whole of Canada was now lost to France.

Her fortune was no better in the East; and those of her people who had sought wealth and power in her Asiatic settlements were doomed, equally with her American colonists, to deplore the impolicy of a war with a nation whose naval preponderance laid all the transmarine dependencies of other countries at her mercy. It was only during the present reign, during, indeed, the last half of it, that the Indian settlements of France had risen to any considerable importance; but, towards the end of Fleury's administration, two men of great abilities and great ambition, Mahé la Bourdonnais and Dupleix, became the governors of

the Islands of France and Bourbon, and of Pondicherry, the principal French establishment on the continent, and devoted all their great talents and energies partly to strengthening their influence with the native princes, and partly (their first-named object being chiefly aimed at as a stepping-stone to the second) to overthrowing the power of England in those countries, and establishing for their own sovereign and their own countrymen a monopoly of the Oriental trade, which of all sources of riches, whether to nations or to individuals, was then believed to be the most prolific and the most inexhaustible. It was fortunate for the English that he who was invested with the most extensive power in a high degree neutralized his great talents for planning and executing operations by an exceeding jealousy of others whose co-operation might have been most useful, and overweening arrogance to every one, whether in India or in Europe. Dupleix had originally gone out to Bengal as a servant of the French East India Company, but had soon displayed a largeness of views and a genius for organization fitted for a wider field and a higher sphere than operations of trade. He began to develop the ambition of a conqueror; he founded towns, he built ships, he negotiated treaties with native princes; and it was but a merited recognition of the ability with which he had extended the authority of the Company on the Ganges, that in 1742 he was appointed Governor-General of Pondicherry. La Bourdonnais had been a naval officer, at first in the royal service, which, when a lieutenant, he exchanged for that of the same Company; that he presently quitted for a time, with the consent of his own Government, having accepted the offers of the Portuguese viceroy of Goa, who, struck

by his professional abilities and diplomatic address, offered him an important command. But he was of too patriotic a spirit to feel an interest in the prosperity of establishments which could only thrive in rivalry to those of his own country, and he soon returned to France. The attention of the French India Company had lately been attracted to the richness and value of the islands in the Indian seas, and also to the utter absence of organization of any kind in their own establishments there, which had hitherto rendered them a source of embarrassment rather than of profit; and to remedy such a state of affairs the directors, who had been taught to appreciate the genius of La Bourdonnais by the esteem in which they saw that it was held by others, in 1733 appointed him Governor of the Isles of France and Bourbon, with full powers of every kind for the correction of abuses, the supply of defects, and the establishment of any new institutions that might be required. It was an arduous task that lay before him, for the evils really existing far exceeded any report of them which had reached France.

There had hitherto been no system of law, no recognised authority. Enervated by the luxurious climate, the settlers had been contented with little more than a scanty subsistence, and had made scarcely any attempt to develop the fertility of the soil, or the facilities for commerce suggested by the varied character of its produce or the excellence of its harbours. La Bourdonnais had acuteness to see the evils, judgment to remedy them, and influence with his countrymen to induce them willingly to acquiesce in and co-operate with him in all his reforms and new regulations. In a surprisingly short time he gave a new appearance and character to his whole

government; he constructed ports, arsenals, dock-yards, and forts; made roads and canals; by judicious investigation he discovered the crops best suited to the soil, and encouraged their cultivation; and the benefits derived from his wise and energetic administration were so rapid and so great, that when in the war of 1743 the English fleet threatened Pondicherry, Dupleix could confidently apply to him for assistance, and he could furnish it so effectually that he not only protected Pondicherry, beating off an English squadron under Captain Peyton, but besieged and took Madras, which, as his instructions from the Government forbade him to retain any acquisition won by conquest from any other European nation, he allowed the English council to ransom, the price for its safe restoration being fixed at nearly half a million of money.* His success led to a quarrel with the very man whom he had so efficiently aided. Dupleix, after he was relieved from his fears for Pondicherry, had done what he could to hinder his operations against Madras, and the moment that it had capitulated he claimed it as within his jurisdiction. He then annulled the capitulation, destroyed a great part of the town, and took upon himself to supersede La Bourdonnais in the government of the islands. La Bourdonnais returned to France, whither complaints of his conduct had already been forwarded by Dupleix, and the influence of Dupleix at Court was so superior to his that he was

* "Il est expressement defendu au Sieur de la Bourdonnais de s'emparer d'aucun établissement ou comptoir des ennemis pour le conserver," signed Orry, and quoted by Mill, "British India," iii. p. 61. See also as general authorities for the French transactions in India between 1743 and 1763, Voltaire's "Siècle de Louis XV.," c. 29, 34, and the articles Mahé Labourdonnais, Dupleix, and Lally Tollendal, in the "Biographie Universelle."

thrown into the Bastille, where for more than three years he was treated with extraordinary rigour; his wife and children were refused access to him, and he was denied the use of pens and paper. At last the commission appointed to examine into the charges brought against him declared his entire innocence of them all. But the acquittal came too late for any object but the vindication of his honour; the ill-treatment which he had received had broken his health and spirits, and in 1755, shortly after his release, he died. By this time the Government had become inclined of its own accord to avenge him on his persecutor Dupleix, and sought to make such reparation of their injustice to him as was now practicable, by conferring a pension on his widow, the patent by which it was granted stating that he had "died without receiving any reward or any compensation for such persecutions and such services."

Meanwhile Dupleix, elated at La Bourdonnais' victory over the English, and perhaps equally at his own victory over the conqueror, proceeded to attack the other English settlements on the eastern side of the Deccan, and some of the native princes; the latter of whom were never long without giving pretexts for hostilities to his aggressive and unscrupulous genius, partly from the innate faithlessness with which they violated treaties, transferring their alliance from one antagonist to another, as reinforcements, successes, or disasters seemed to give either the preponderance; and partly from the complications of family connexions, and the unsettled state of the law of succession, which on the death of any potentate usually raised up numerous claimants for his inheritance. Dupleix had scarcely compelled La Bourdonnais to make over Madras to him, when he proceeded to lay

siege to Fort St. David, an English settlement nearer Pondicherry. He was forced to relinquish that attempt by the arrival of an English fleet; but on the other hand he repelled the English commanders when, in retaliation, they invested Pondicherry. The Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, however, compelled him to desist from hostilities against them, and to restore Madras. But, though no longer at enmity on their own account, he and the English governors and commanders naturally took different sides in every native quarrel. At first he was the most successful. He was not himself a soldier, nor possessed of any military ardour; indeed, he was wont to confess himself confused by the din of arms, and requiring tranquillity for the exercise of his genius; but he had to command his troops an officer of eminent abilities, the Marquis de Bussy. With his aid, in 1749, on the death of the Nizam, as the viceroy of the Deccan was styled, Dupleix made war upon his son, Nazir Jung, who had succeeded him, in order to establish a partisan of his own on the vacant throne. The French force, which scarcely exceeded two thousand men, was viewed with utter contempt by Nazir Jung, who pronounced that they must be all drunk to think of encountering his army; though he was not long left in ignorance of the degree in which European discipline can counterbalance the most prodigious inequality of numbers.* With warriors who could only be counted by tens of thousands, he was threatening Pondicherry, when a captain named Latouche planned and executed a nocturnal surprise of his army, which

* Voltaire states the Indian army to have consisted of 80,000 men. The author of the article Dupleix in the "Biog. Univ." swells the numbers to 300,000. The last number is incredible; and even the first is probably an exaggeration.

has few equals in the completeness of its success. At the head of only three hundred men, he broke into the Nizam's camp; with the loss of but three of his own followers, he slaughtered 1200 of the enemy, and spread such consternation through the whole force, that it retired in precipitation to Arcot. Thither Bussy pursued it, and there again the Nizam prepared for battle. But Dupleix did not rely wholly on the skill of Bussy or the valour of Latouche. He had a weapon in reserve of which the Indian prince, treacherous as he was, had no suspicion. He had tampered with his officers, and had instigated a band of conspirators to assassinate him. As he was advancing to battle, they shot him. Mirzapha Jung, who had been the late Nizam's barber till he was promoted to be his son-in-law, was installed as Nizam in his place; Chunda Sahib, another creature of Dupleix, received the appointment, subordinate in rank, but only slightly inferior in power, of Nabob of the Carnatic. The two princes rewarded their French allies with vast sums of money, to be distributed among the bulk of the army. On Dupleix and all his family they conferred enormous pensions, and to the Company they granted the whole coast between the Krishna and Cape Comorin. And Dupleix, in his exultation, began to conceive loftier plans of self-aggrandizement, and to betray them by a pomp such as no European had ever before displayed in any country. He received the new Nizam at Pondicherry like a king doing the honours of his court to a friendly sovereign; riding himself in a palanquin, and wearing oriental robes of state. Then dismounting, he seated himself and Mirzapha on a gorgeous throne; and, amid the clang of cymbals and the roar of artillery, caused Mirzapha's accession to be pro-

claimed; and retaining his seat while the inferior nabobs and rajahs did homage to their new chief, received from him in return formal investiture of the splendid territory assigned to himself. On the scene of Nazir Jung's murder he laid the foundations of a handsome town, to be called Dupleix Fatehabad, the City of the Victory of Dupleix; and he presently purchased of the Great Mogul the rank of Viceroy of the Carnatic for himself, which he had but just procured for Chunda Sahib. Nor was the exultation which these successes produced at Paris less than his own. For a moment there was an excitement in his favour almost equal to that which Law had formerly kindled. The yearly revenues of the territories newly granted to the Company were stated at 39,000,000 of livres, and were expected to raise its entire clear income to above two millions sterling; a sum at that time exceeding the revenue of any sovereign in Europe. A shareholder in such a company was more than a mere rich man; he was a prince. And while the name of Dupleix, as the cause and minister of all this greatness, was in every one's mouth, the Government shared the enthusiasm and stimulated it by unusual honours. He was created a marquis, and received the grand ribbon of the order of St. Louis, an honour which had previously been confined to military officers. A second time, in a single reign, France was revelling in dreams of wealth from which there was to be a painful waking.

When Dupleix was seeking to supplant Chunda Sahib as Viceroy of the Carnatic, though he does not appear to have been aware of the fact, he was only anticipating his ally in the race of treachery. For Chunda had been already proposing to some of his

brother princes to unite in a league for the extermination of all the Christians in India; but as they both dissembled their projects, and continued in apparent alliance, the course of Dupleix's intrigues involved him in fresh wars, which resulted in the complete overthrow of his country's authority in India.

Chunda Sahib had not been without a competitor for the government of the Carnatic, Mehemet Ali, whose cause, as a matter of course, had been espoused by the English when the French took Chunda under their protection. Chunda, however, had defeated his rival in more than one engagement, and, having driven him from more than one stronghold, at last besieged him in Trinchinopoly, which was the only place of importance left to him. A French brigade formed a part of Chunda's army, and it was so evident that its success would be fraught with overwhelming danger to the English settlements in the province, that the English Council became anxious to defeat their enterprise. They had, however, but little prospect of being able to do so. They had only a handful of troops available, and no officer of rank or experience to take the command of the few they had. But their difficulty, through its very extremity, led to their triumph, by procuring a hearing for the design of a young officer, who had but lately embraced a military life, having, like Dupleix, first gone out to India in a mercantile employment, Robert Clive. It was now that he laid the foundation of a fame which has but one equal in the annals of India, and few in the history of the world. He saw that two hundred British soldiers and three hundred sepoy, which constituted the whole force which the Council could spare, could never venture to approach Trinchinopoly itself; but

he conceived the idea that they might be sufficient to attack Arcot, which had been left undefended; and that the danger of so important a city would draw off the besiegers from Trinchinopoly. The plan was approved, and its execution was committed to Clive himself, who, marching with great expedition, exceeded his own anticipations of success by capturing the city which he had only hoped to be able to alarm. But the effort which he had expected Chunda to make for the defence of his capital the Viceroy was naturally more certain to make for its recovery; and he at once sent his son, Rajah Sahib, with ten thousand men, including a brigade of French, to accomplish that object. Even in the few days that had elapsed between his capture of the place and their appearance before it, Clive had done what with such a handful of men he could do for the repair of the fortifications, and he not only defended it against the enemy's utmost efforts for seven weeks, but at the end of that time, having procured the aid of a body of native troops, though he knew that his besieger had obtained a still larger reinforcement, with three French companies among them, he sallied out and gave the rajah battle, and a decisive defeat.

Clive had also calculated correctly when he judged that, if Chunda reduced his force before Trinchinopoly, he would be unable to take it. He would not, however, raise the siege, which was protracted so long, that Clive was able, some months afterwards, to attack him while still before the city. Chunda was defeated and slain; Mehemet Ali was acknowledged through the chief part of the province as the nabob, and the result of Clive's campaign was the ruin of Dupleix. The East India Company would not probably have either objected to his schemes, little

founded in justice as they were, nor have looked on their failure as a crime on his part, had his general government been prosperous in a financial point of view. But at the same time that intelligence of his defeats reached Paris, the shareholders also learned that there were no dividends for them ; but that the funds to which they had looked had been exhausted in these wars, their disasters in which had lessened their hopes of revenue for the future. They might have been expected to bear the want of returns patiently, for they were accustomed to it. They never had received a dividend.* But Dupleix took no trouble to soften their disappointment to them ; on the contrary, instead of being humbled by his ill-fortune, it only rendered him more and more arrogant : he daily paid less and less attention to their injunctions, and at last disowned their authority altogether, and declared that he owed responsibility to none but the king.† He added to this haughty language assertions of their position which, when compared with the facts, looked like deliberate mockery. He bade them be contented, because, after the discharge of all their liabilities, they had property in India worth above a million sterling. And their wealth, great as it was, might easily be increased. The revenues of the kingdom of Tanjore were 1,500,000 livres a year. They might have them, also, for merely stretching out their hands to take them. And he ventured on these assertions at the same moment that the Council at Pondicherry assured

* " Elle [leur Compagnie] n'a jamais pu fournir le moindre dividende à ses actionnaires du produit de son commerce. C'est la seule compagnie de l'Europe qui soit dans ce cas."—"Siècle de Louis XV.," c. 29.

† " Enfin il en était venu à décliner l'autorité de la Compagnie, et à écrire que le roi seul avait le droit de juger sa conduite."—"Biog. Univ."

them that, so far from having any available property whatever, they were enormously in debt; that they had no money to meet the most necessary expenses, while their credit was so bad that they could borrow none at a lower rate of interest than 20 per cent. It was hardly to be wondered at that they determined on recalling him. The Governor under whose rule their affairs had fallen into such a state, M. Godeseu, was sent out to supersede him, and to ascertain the truth or falsehood of his representations. His report was unfavourable to Dupleix on almost every point; on that of the financial state of the Company wholly so. Instead of the vast wealth and resources of which Dupleix had spoken, all the money which M. Godeseu found in the treasury did not amount to nine thousand rupees, while the arrears and liabilities were vast beyond ascertainment or calculation; nor did there seem any great prospect of better times, for trade was falling off, and orders were diminishing in numbers. In fact, as M. Godeseu represented the case, the Company was hopelessly bankrupt. And though Dupleix, on his return to France, contested his statement and figures as far as he could; and, where he could not, ascribed the difficulties which he was forced to admit to the interference of his successor with his projects when they were on the point of realization, he could find few believers in his statements. He lived nine years after his recall; years to him of great anxiety of mind and distress of circumstances, of protracted law-suits with the Company, and fruitless petitions to the Government. Little, probably, as the prospects which he had held out to the Company would at any time have borne the scrutiny of sober reason, he seems to have

believed them himself. In the execution of his plans for the aggrandizement of the Company he had expended all his own savings. He declared that of his own money, with the addition of what he had borrowed from his relations, he had advanced for the Company thirteen millions of livres. The claim for repayment was all that he had left; and he complained with bitterness that, after having sacrificed his youth, his fortune, and his life, to win honours and riches for his country, having involved all his own relations and friends in his own distress, now that he implored nothing but justice, his services were treated as an idle tale, his demands as a jest, and he himself as the vilest of impostors. So absolute was his destitution, that he was in daily fear of being carried off to prison.* Worn out with delays, and broken-hearted with disappointment, he died in 1763, without having been able to obtain any decision whatever of his claims, whether in his favour or against him. And the manifest injustice of his treatment has perhaps been fortunate for his fame; sympathy for his fall having led posterity to fix its attention chiefly on his brilliant talents, his great designs, and manifest eagerness for the glory of France, and, in consideration of them, to overlook the intemperance of his ambition, his want of magnanimity, and his unscrupulous faithlessness.

* "J'ai sacrifié ma jeunesse, ma fortune, ma vie, à combler d'honneurs et de richesse ma nation en Asie. . . . De malheureux amis, de trop faibles parens, des citoyens vertueux consacrent tous leurs biens pour faire réussir mes projets. . . . ils sont tous dans la misère. . . . Mes services sont des fables : ma demande est ridicule : je suis traité comme le plus vil des hommes. . . . Je suis dans la plus déplorable indigence. . . . j'ai été obligé d'obtenir des arrêts de surséance pour n'être pas traîné en prison !" —"Biog. Univ."

Nor has it been unfavorable to his reputation that an officer who two years afterwards succeeded to his post, and who was also a man of ability and a soldier of proved courage, met with still greater disasters in his administration, and with still more iniquitous treatment from the Government. As on the renewal of the war with England a more warlike hand than that of M. Godescu was wanted at the helm, the Count de Lally obtained the appointment of Governor of Pondicherry. His grandfather had been an Irishman, and one of the adherents of James II. for whom that unfortunate monarch had obtained employment in the French service; and he himself, full of indignation at the fancied wrongs of his king and of his own family, sought every occasion to combat the English. He had served as a volunteer at Fontenoy, where he had with his own hand made prisoners of several English officers, distinguishing himself by such fiery valour that he received a colonel's commission as his reward. And as there now seemed likely to be no field for the exertions of a soldier against the English equal to that of India, the command in that country was sought by him with great eagerness. He obtained the object of his ambition chiefly through the influence of D'Argenson, who was connected with him by private friendship, and who had a high opinion of his talents, but who, if he had been left to his own judgment, would rather have employed those talents in Europe: for he knew his friend's impatience of any violation of discipline or order, and above all of the slightest appearance of corruption; and foresaw that by the vehemence with which he would denounce everything of which he disapproved, he would raise a host of enemies, who would not scruple to disconcert his plans, and even to secure the failure of his opera-

tions, on purpose to bring him into disgrace.* At the moment, however, the Company was as anxious to obtain his services as he was to give them; and between them they overruled the friendly, and, as they proved, prophetic scruples of the minister.

Lally reached Pondicherry in the spring of 1757, and at once began operations by the siege of Fort St. David. It was insufficiently garrisoned and badly commanded. Lally took it without difficulty, and razed it to the ground. Pushing his advantages with great rapidity, he also recovered Arcot, and then prepared to attack Madras, in the hope of finally annihilating the British power in the Deccan. Had his energy as a soldier been combined with ordinary temper and discretion, and had the Count d'Aché, the admiral who was sent out to co-operate with him, been equal to the duty confided to him, the British establishments in that district would indeed have been in great danger: for Clive was fully occupied in Bengal, and though Mr. Pigot, the Governor of the Madras Presidency, and Colonel Draper, the commander at Fort St. George, were both men of resolution, their means were very inadequate to resist the force which Lally could bring against them. But his arrogance and impracticability not only far exceeded any exhibition

* D'Argenson said to the directors of the Company:—"Je sais mieux que vous ce que vaut M. Lally; et de plus, il est mon ami; mais il faut nous le laisser en Europe. C'est du feu que son activité. Il ne transige pas sur la discipline, a en horreur tout ce qui ne marche pas droit, se dépite contre tout ce qui ne va pas vite, ne tait rien de ce qu'il sent, et l'exprime en termes qui ne s'oublient pas. Tout cela est excellent parmi nous. Mais dans vos comptoirs en Asie que vous en semble? À la première négligence qui compromettra les armes du roi, à la première apparence d'insubordination ou de friponnerie, M. de Lally tonnera, s'il ne s'évit pas. On fera manquer ses opérations pour se venger de lui. Pondichéry aura guerre civile dans ses murs avec la guerre extérieure à ses portes."—"Biog. Univ.," Art. Lally.

of the pride of Dupleix, but they also were displayed at the expense of his own adopted countrymen even more than towards the natives. Among the duties enjoined him by his instructions was that of reforming abuses, checking the prodigality to which the officers of the different departments were inclined, and stemming the disorders which embarrassed the whole financial system. He could conceive no other way of fulfilling his orders but that of quarrelling with every official, denouncing them to their faces as rogues, and threatening to report them as such to the Company and to the Government. Chains and dungeons, as a magistrate of high rank recorded in his journal, were, according to his ordinary conversation, the desert of every one. His language concerning the army was not more measured: he proclaimed it, from the highest officer to the lowest camp-follower, a mere band of ferocious plunderers. It was not strange that the civilians wrote home letters full of complaints of his insolence, or that the soldiers openly threatened to desert in a body to the enemy. M. d'Aché's faults were equally grave, but of a different character. He had bravery, but not much energy, and skill very inferior to Admiral Pocock, who at this time commanded the British fleet in the Indian waters. The force under his orders was apparently sufficient to annihilate his enemy, being more numerous by one-third, and still more superior in number of guns and weight of metal. But he was defeated in three engagements, and at last reduced to complete inaction, and equally disabled from undertaking any enterprise on his own account, or from assisting his colleague on land.

Lally's complaints of the predatory disposition of his army were not unfounded. In the last weeks of 1758 he commenced the siege of Madras, and took the

lower, or Black Town as it was often called, without difficulty; the British commanders thinking their garrison only adequate to the defence of Fort St. George, or the White Town, and that they resolved to maintain to the last. The troops at their disposal amounted to 1,800 English and 2,200 sepoys. The besiegers numbered 2,700 French and 4,000 natives. The contest, therefore, since, while Pocock kept the command of the sea, the besieged were in no danger of being straitened for want of supplies, was from the first not in Lally's favour; and after the capture of the Black Town it became clearly beyond his strength, so wholly did his men give themselves up to pillage and drunkenness, and the other disorders which such habits inevitably engender. For the treasures which fell into the hands of the soldiers were enormous, according to their general's estimate, worth at least fifteen millions of livres; many of the men deserted to secure the booty which they had been able to appropriate, or which their officers had employed them to carry off; and the town also contained vast stores of arrack, from which no strictness of regulation nor severity of punishment could restrain them.* His effective numbers, therefore, soon became greatly reduced, and when, after above seven weeks of constant firing, he had made an inconsiderable breach in the walls, his officers were unanimous in pronouncing their force unequal to the assault of it with the slightest prospect of success.

* "Si nous manquons Madras, comme je le crois, la principale raison à laquelle il faudra l'attribuer est le pillage de quinze millions au moins, tant de devasté que du repandu dans le soldat, et, j'ai honte de le dire, dans l'officier, qui n'a pas craint de se servir de mon nom en s'emparant des topazes chelingués et autres pour faire passer à Pondichéry un butin que vous auriez dû faire arrêter, vu son énorme quantité."—Letter of Lally's, quoted by Voltaire, "Siècle de Louis XV." c. 34.

With great indignation he raised the siege, and retired to Arcot; but heavier misfortunes were in store for him. Before the end of the year, Colonel Eyre Coote, the best soldier, except Clive himself, that had yet been seen in India, landed at Madras as commander-in-chief, and, having brought with him a strong reinforcement of royal troops, at once assumed the offensive. He took Wandewash, a mountain fort of some strength, which had hitherto defied the British arms, and of such importance that Lally thought it worth while to hazard a battle for its recovery. It was in vain that Bussy tried to dissuade him from such an enterprise: he considered his honour staked to recapture it; and he was also aware that, in spite of Coote's reinforcement, he had still the superiority in numbers, and especially in horse. The sepoys and native allies were of little account on either side; but Lally had 1,950 French infantry and 300 cavalry, Coote only 1,800 infantry and less than 100 cavalry. But the British commander, having early intelligence of his approach, was able to choose his own ground; and he posted his men to receive the intended attack with great judgment on ground so intersected with rice-fields and ditches as greatly to embarrass the movements of the French horse. He also skilfully placed a small battery of two guns to command the most open space; and Lally, though he led on his troops in person with the most daring and resolute gallantry, could make no impression on his position. Gradually the French were beaten back; Bussy was taken prisoner; and when Lally at last consented to retreat, he had lost above a fourth of his French troops. Coote's loss of English did not amount to two hundred; but though the native troops on each side far exceeded the Europeans in number, their ranks were almost un-

diminished: they had been little more than spectators of the conflict.

So decisive a defeat drew upon the French the loss of Trincomalee, Cuddalore, and several other important towns and fortresses; and at last, after having in vain attempted to procure assistance from the great Mysore chief, Hyder Ali, Lally was forced to retire to Pondicherry; and there, at the beginning of December, 1760, Coote besieged him. Pondicherry was ruined by its own magnitude. It had a population of between sixty and seventy thousand souls; and it was very insufficiently supplied with provisions. Lally proposed to expel all but the soldiers, and with them to hold the place till he could persuade some of the native princes to come to his relief. But the Council, whom he was forced to consult, rejected such a proposal with horror. Angry at contradiction, he began to threaten the Council. If there were any delay in supplying what was necessary for the sustenance of the population and the defence of the place, he declared that he would harness the members themselves to waggons, and make them draw. He then instituted a search for provisions, which he fancied might be concealed, and carried it out with such rigour as to disgust the citizens, who began to think it might be better to be captured by the English than defended by the French. They murmured openly and loudly. He declared the place a Sodom, which, if heaven should not send down its bolts for the purpose, would surely be destroyed by the fire of the English. The citizens were not backward in returning such insults. They placarded his gates with offensive documents; and, not without some apparent reason, declared him mad. Such quarrellings did not facilitate the defence of the place; and on the 14th of January, 1761, four weeks after Coote

had first appeared before it, Lally was compelled to surrender. The fortifications were destroyed, and with them a great portion of the town; and Lally himself was sent as a prisoner of war to England.

So bitter had the inhabitants of Pondicherry been against him, that it was with some difficulty that Coote was able to protect him from their violence: and, even while he was being conveyed through the town in a palanquin with an English guard, felt compelled to allow him pistols for his defence. Lally believed, however, that in Paris he should find greater favour; and, learning that letters of accusation against him had been sent to the Government, he implored the English ministers to release him that he might repair to France to answer them. In an evil hour for him they consented. He was at once thrown into the Bastille; and, after a long imprisonment, was at last prosecuted on a double charge of treason and peculation. The charge of treason, as Voltaire remarks, was disproved by the mere fact of the judges being able to try him on it: since if, as was alleged, he had betrayed Pondicherry to the English, he would certainly have chosen to remain in England; and for that of peculation there was still less ground. That offence it never had been in his power to commit, since he had never had any funds belonging either to the king or the company at his disposal. But he had made enemies of all the officials in India, and of the Council, who were resolved on his ruin; and Lally's violent language alienated his judges in France. Bussy, also, who was nearly connected by marriage with Choiseul, and whom he trusted to produce as a witness in his favour, was his enemy. He was not without an uneasy fear that the loss of Pondicherry might be attributed to his own military mismanagement, if he could not divert the

indignation of the Government to another victim ; and he openly declared that either Lally's head or his own must fall. Lally's trial was conducted with the most open disregard of even the most ordinary forms of justice. He was refused the assistance of counsel, time to arrange his defence, or to procure evidence. The Attorney-General even refused to look at the documents which were laid before him in disproof of the heaviest charges. It was plain that what was aimed at was not the ascertainment of the truth, but the destruction of the prisoner. And those who made this their object had the power to secure it. He was convicted, and condemned to be beheaded, partly as a traitor, and partly as a tyrant, as having abused his authority by lawless exactions and vexations of the French settlers. It was a sentence of monstrous injustice ; and his astonishment at it almost equalled his indignation. When it was first announced to him, he tried to stab himself with a pair of compasses, and loaded the judges and the witnesses, and every one concerned, with reproaches, which were not undeserved. As his vehemence continued unabated, the execution of the sentence was hastened. The gaolers gagged him when he was conducted to the scaffold, lest he should harangue the populace ; and thus, with every circumstance of indignity, this brave and honest, but rash and unfortunate man, was put to death.

Lally's son closes a biographical sketch of Duplex with the enumeration of the indignities inflicted on him, and the reflection "how thoroughly the French East India Company had deserved its downfall."* Undoubtedly the observation was chiefly prompted by the recollection of the yet more cruel treatment

* "Biographie Univ.," Art. Duplex.

dealt out to his own father. It is plain that his real crime was want of success; and that the disasters already incurred by Dupleix had rendered inevitable. But such a series of acts of injustice to every one invested with authority in India is a plain proof how thoroughly rotten was the system of government in France at this time; how every fountain of law and justice was corrupted. It is remarkable that the still greater men who in the same generation founded the British power in the same country, were also treated with the grossest injustice; and that attempts were made to sacrifice them also to the interests of parties at home. But the result of these machinations showed the superior power of English law, the superior purity of English justice. In Clive's case, his enemies shrank before an indignant Parliament. Warren Hastings, after a trial scandalously, but perhaps unavoidably protracted, in which the charges against him were enforced with a richness and variety of eloquence to which the history of the world affords no parallel, was acquitted of them all; and while in each case, and more especially in the latter instance, the whole power of the Government was exerted against those on their trial, in each the Company whose servants they had been manfully stood forward in their defence, and did what it could to repair and make amends for the wrongs inflicted on them. If the French Company, by its treatment of La Bourdonnais, Dupleix, and Lally, deserved its fall, the English Company, by its grateful support of and liberality to Hastings, fairly earned its long prosperity.

In one point alone Lally was not altogether unfortunate. His memory was not irretrievably and for ever branded by his condemnation. English readers, bearing chiefly in mind Voltaire's ribald and impious

scoffs at religion, are too apt to extend the detestation which they deserve to every other part of his conduct, and to forget that, where religion was not concerned, he often showed himself far superior to his contemporaries in general enlightenment of mind, and especially in the zeal with which he often stood forward as the champion of justice and humanity. This latter quality he displayed in an eminent degree, and in a manner which also remarkably exhibited his courage and disinterestedness, in the case of Lally. He had disapproved of many parts of the unhappy nobleman's conduct while in India, and Choiseul, the minister who had sanctioned his execution, was his own especial patron. But every other consideration yielded in his mind to his deep conviction of Lally's innocence of the accusations brought against him, and of the violation of all justice and all law by which his condemnation had been secured, and he applied all his talents and energies and influence to procure justice at least for his memory by obtaining its reversal. After a time he was ably seconded by the son of the deceased, who was but a boy when his father suffered; and in the next reign their unwearied efforts at last prevailed on the king to remit the whole matter to the reconsideration of the Parliament. Seventy-two councillors unanimously pronounced the conviction and sentence both unjust and illegal. It was formally reversed, and his estates which had been confiscated were restored to his son, not without some special expressions of the king's sense of his filial piety which had thus enabled him to do a tardy justice to the services of the father.

By the beginning of 1762 every nation had become weary of the war, but no nation had so much reason for the feeling as France, which had seen her armies

defeated and disgraced, her fleets ruined, and all her foreign settlements torn from her one after another; and this the last year of hostilities did not pass off without contributing its full share to her mortifications. She began it with better hopes; in the autumn of 1761 Choiseul had signed that celebrated offensive and defensive treaty with Spain distinguished as the Family Compact (though, as we have already seen, neither the principles on which it was founded nor the stipulations which it contained were altogether new), by which the two sovereigns agreed for the future to consider the enemies of either the enemies of both, and mutually guaranteed the territories of one another; and in January 1762 war between Spain and England was formally declared. But it soon appeared that the only result of the Spanish alliance was to inflict on Spain her full share of the calamities which had already fallen so heavily on France. In a few months the English captured from her the Havannah and Manilla, with merchant vessels and treasure-ships of a value almost incredible; while neither by land nor sea could she retaliate in the least degree, nor even so far alarm the English Cabinet as to cause the withdrawal of a single battalion from the contingent which was still co-operating with Prince Ferdinand on the Rhine. France had still nearly a hundred thousand men in the district between Coblenz and Cassel, under Soubise and D'Estrées, now in a very bad state of health and quite incapable of exertion, and the Prince of Condé had a second army lower down the Rhine. All the commanders were enjoined to keep strictly on the defensive, and they carried out their instructions so clumsily that the opposing generals easily divined their plans, and attacked their posts in every direction, seeing that they had

nothing to fear. The whole campaign was a series of small engagements, in almost every one of which the French were worsted, with a loss which, though not generally very heavy in any particular case, swelled in the aggregate to one which made a very important diminution of their force. Even in one instance, in which a dangerous wound received by the Prince of Brunswick in the heat of an action near Johannisberg left his troops temporarily without a commander, and led to their being driven back in great disorder, the advantage thus gained did not enable the French to save Cassel; and, on the whole, this apparently uneventful year impaired their strength more than those which were rendered more conspicuous by the disasters of Rosbach or Minden. The French Government, therefore, was now as eager for peace as, while Maria Teresa's flatteries were fresh in Madame de Pompadour's mind, it had been desirous of war; and in England changes had taken place which made that Government also more moderate and more inclined to negotiate. In the autumn of 1760 George II. had died, and had been succeeded by his youthful grandson, who had neither any knowledge of warlike operations nor any thirst for personal glory to be won in the field of battle; and one of the consequences of this change of taste on the part of the sovereign was the retirement of Pitt from the Cabinet, an event of the greatest weight in deciding the question of the maintenance or abandonment of the war, since Pitt, however admirable a minister in many respects, was so far a most pernicious one for any country that he did not scruple to avow himself fond of war for its own sake. But Lord Bute, who succeeded to his power, was so far from sharing that feeling that he was the first to make overtures for

peace, which were promptly and cordially met by Choiseul. The two Governments exchanged negotiators; but if the success of the negotiation had depended on their talents it would never have been concluded; for the Duke de Nivernois, the same envoy who had been sent to tempt Frederic with the offer of Tobago, had no diplomatic experience beyond what he had gained in that unprofitable mission, and no especial talent except one for writing songs in honour of low-born beauty;* while the English plenipotentiary, the Duke of Bedford, had neither experience nor talent of any kind. But the sincerity of the Governments of both countries was on this occasion too earnest to be baffled by any shortcomings of their agents. Indeed, Choiseul and Bute themselves settled the most important preliminaries, transmitting letters to one another by the intervention of the Sardinian envoys at Paris and London; and wary as Bute's countrymen are usually supposed to be, beyond all question the Frenchman showed as much superiority to him in diplomacy as the English commanders had shown to the French in the conduct of the war. France had nothing to give up but Minorca, which she exchanged for Belleisle, which the British Commodore Keppel had captured in 1761; not, indeed, that the two islands were of equal value either in extent or fertility or general importance, but that the proximity of Belleisle to the coast made its recovery a point of honour with the French Government; a fact which was so obvious, that the great inducement which had led Pitt to send an expedition against it was

* See, for instance, one to a baker's daughter and handmaid, quoted by Lord Stanhope:—

*"Si ta main nous fait vivre,
Tes yeux nous font mourir!"*

the expectation that he should be able to exchange it for the greater island in the Mediterranean. Of her other conquests England gave up many without obtaining any countervailing advantage. She retained, indeed, the North American provinces of Canada, with Cape Breton, and some of the least important West Indian islands; but she restored Guadaloupe, Martinique, and Sainte Lucie, as well as Pondicherry; while she also gave back to France's ally, the Spaniard, her conquests both in west and east, the Havannah, and the rich Philippines. On these terms peace was signed at Paris between France and England on the 10th of February, 1763; five days later a similar treaty was signed at Huberstburg, in Saxony, between the German belligerents, on the basis of a general restitution of conquests: and the Seven Years' War was ended, England being the only power which had gained anything by it, and her acquisitions bearing no proportion to the loss of life or even of treasure by which they had been purchased.

CHAPTER XXX.

WHILE the armies and fleets of Louis were reaping defeats and discredit by land and sea, his Government at home was engaged in a more successful warfare against those whom it looked on as the enemies, not of itself alone, but of the kingly authority in every country. Many circumstances had latterly combined to concentrate the hatred of the nation upon the Jesuits; the principal one being, perhaps, the course which its literature had for the most part taken during the present reign. Under Louis XIV., brilliant as it was, its lustre had been tainted with a servility so universal that neither the votaries of science nor even the teachers of religion and morality could keep themselves free from the contagion.* The Regent, who, to do him justice, in spite of his vices had a more manly spirit, as well as greater talents, than that monarch, had relieved literature in some degree of that reproach by his own indifference to flattery, which would have done him honour had not other parts of his conduct made it doubtful whether

* Even Bossuet could so degrade himself as to say in his funeral oration on the queen, that Louis "agissait de tous côtés par l'impression de sa vertu;" and Fléchier, in his discourse on the death of the Chancellor Le Tellier, spoke of "le témoignage d'un roi dont les paroles sont des oracles," and affirmed that Louis, the persecutor of Fouquet, the inventor of the iron mask, made justice "la règle de ses désirs et de ses actions."

what seemed to be such was not in reality an indifference to the opinions of his countrymen altogether ; and if he had not at the same time shown an equal indifference to every other restraint which either the weakness of former masters or the becoming prejudices of former generations had imposed on it. At no period of the reign of Louis XIV. had any author ventured openly to disparage or to ridicule religion, much less to make formal profession of infidelity ; but, under the unhappy sway of Philippe D'Orleans, and the Duke de Bourbon, the habitual profanity of their conversation naturally gave the tone to the writers of the capital ; those who wished to be well with the court imitating its language, and in their publications reproducing the foul witticisms of Dubois and Madame de Prie, while impiety gradually became more attractive, or at least more fashionable than even indecency.

It is singular that the writer who subsequently earned the greatest notoriety in both lines, and who by the brilliancy of his talents might be supposed calculated above all others to be the idol of such a company as the Regent gathered around him, was only notorious in that day as having fallen under his displeasure, and having been imprisoned on a charge of which he was wholly innocent. Voltaire was nearly one-and-twenty at the death of the last king ; his father was a notary named Arouet, employed among others by St. Simon, who, appreciating the early promise of talent displayed by his son, and solicitous to wean him from the licentious habits for which, even at a very early age, he showed a predilection, sent him to be educated in a college of Jesuits. If they were more assiduous (more successful they certainly were) in storing his mind with learning than with religious principles, they had cause to repent their system of

education at a later day when he was their most unwearied assailant. But he was not left wholly to them. Even as a child he had been introduced into the fashionable society of the capital, which he charmed by his precocity; so that the notorious Ninon de L'Enclos, who died when he was eleven years old, left him a library. And, even had the Jesuits been more scrupulous teachers of the theory of virtue than they ever showed themselves, their lessons must have been deprived of much of their influence over a keen-witted and observant boy by the opportunities afforded him of comparing them with their fruits, as seen in the hypocritical formality of the palace, the unrestrained licentiousness of the society outside the court, and the indulgence which hypocrites and profligates alike received from them. His excesses of various kinds produced violent quarrels between him and his father, so that the old man almost disowned him, and the son changed his name to conceal their relationship.* Before the death of Louis he had become notorious for a propensity to exercise his wit at the expense of the established order of things, and especially of religion; and his fame in that way was so established that when, shortly after that event, a satire was circulated assailing the deceased monarch with more than usual poignancy, common report pointed him out as the author; and, though in truth he had had no concern in it, the Regent threw him into the Bastille. It was not his only visit to that great prison fortress. A few years afterwards some of his jests so offended the Chevalier de Rohan that, in imitation of the base revenge which in England Rochester had wreaked on Dryden,† he sent his servants to waylay him in

* St. Simon, xiv. 124, xv. 69.

† See note on "Peveril of the Peak," vol. ii. c. 14.

the street, and cane him. Voltaire instantly sent a challenge to their master; who, having no inclination to risk his personal safety, or more probably, thinking a mere poet not entitled to measure swords with a noble and a soldier, replied to it by procuring a warrant for his arrest. On his release he crossed over to England; and even an Englishman must allow that his visit to this country had an unhappy effect in contributing to root the principles of infidelity more firmly in his mind. Between his two imprisonments he had produced the tragedy of "Œdipus," which, in spite of some biting sneers at the priesthood, had been received with general applause as being worthy to be ranked with the productions of Corneille and Racine; and the celebrity with which it had invested him, procured him the acquaintance of Lord Bolingbroke, then, both as a patron and a brother author, recognised by the London men of letters as their chief. Voltaire was powerfully affected by admiration for many things which he witnessed in England, and especially for that real freedom of opinion and of discussion on all subjects which he saw taken as a matter of course; and, desiring to pave the way for such a state of things in his own country, was unhappily persuaded by Bolingbroke's exhortations and example to identify scepticism with that freedom. Accordingly when, after a three years' sojourn in England, for a great portion of which he had been the guest of that most eloquent statesman and writer, he returned to Paris, he gave early indications of the influence to which he had been subjected, and which still prompted him, by the promulgation of materialistic doctrines which he professed to have extracted from the writings of Locke, but which in no degree resembled the opinions of that philosopher. If not actually infidel in the first concep-

tion, in their development they led inevitably to a denial of revealed truth; and therefore the English Letters* were condemned, not only by the clergy, but by men of every shade of religious opinion; and their author, terrified at the storm which he had raised, once more withdrew from Paris. However, he soon returned; and after the death of Fleury finding that the successors to the cardinal's authority were inclined to look with favour on his philosophy, and with indifference on his irreligion, he clung to the latter with more tenacity than ever, looking on it now as the assertion of his triumph over every sect of believers. Unhappily each success fixed him in such opinions more and more; for his next victory was over the prejudices of the king himself, who during Fleury's lifetime had discountenanced him as one who wished to limit the royal authority, but who was at last induced by Madame de Châteauroux to receive him at court, and to send him as envoy to Berlin. This mission, though it failed as a political measure, led to his subsequently settling for a time at the court of Frederic, than whom no one was more ostentatious in his profession of infidelity; and thus he was once more carried forward still further on the road of unbelief, and on his quarrel with the King of Prussia, and consequent return to France, added indecency (from which his worst writings had hitherto been free) to profanity, and issued a poem on the honoured subject of the Maid of Orleans, so gross that the Parliament interfered, and by a formal edict commanded its suppression.

Unhappily by this time he had many coadjutors in his onslaughts against all that was holy or decorous.

* "*Les Lettres Anglaises*" of Voltaire were published in 1734.

Rousseau, though bred in the strict school of Geneva, and always professing Christianity so far that he kept wavering between Calvinism and Catholicism, quitting the former, in which he had been born, and again abjuring the latter to return to it, openly proclaimed himself an enemy to all existing institutions. Indeed with his own habits of life, which were profligate in the extreme, they were more at variance than with those of Voltaire, who after his first boyhood was not addicted to sensual licence. Of both these men, however, in spite of their great abilities, the one predominant principle was vanity. But there was also a graver band of men of science, who, while Voltaire assailed religion by ridicule, and Rousseau by seductive tales, brought against it the heavier artillery of learning and professedly regular argument. Diderot was a metaphysician at once eloquent and logical; D'Alembert as a mathematician had had no equal in France since Pascal; Condillac was unrivalled for the precision of his comprehensive analysis; and in 1751 these men, with Voltaire and other ambitious writers of inferior note, began to issue an encyclopædic dictionary; a work of vast scope, which, under pretext of elucidating every branch of science, was in truth an organized attack upon Christianity, and, in some of its articles, on religion of every kind, even on the most meagre belief in an overruling Providence. They did not choose their time well; for just at that moment Madame de Pompadour, who was always vacillating between her real hatred of the clergy, and her occasional notion that it was expedient to avoid offending them, was in a temporizing humour; and at her instigation the minister forbade the continuance of the publication, as adverse both to Church and State, and threatened Diderot himself, who was the editor, with a

prison. But the next year she was irritated by a belief that the Jesuits, who were always omnipotent with the dauphin, were exciting him and the princesses to machinations against her authority. Some of the Encyclopædists, as they began to be called, obtained access to her, and, not disdaining the aid of courtly flattery, in which Voltaire, above all others, was an adept, so ingratiated themselves with her, that not only he but Diderot and D'Alembert became established favourites at the court; and the encyclopædia reappeared under her avowed patronage.

The contributors of course were not all infidels; some, as for instance the great naturalist Buffon, though in his speculations on the origin of the earth and geology, a science of which he may be considered the founder, he treated the historical authority of Moses with but little reverence, wrote no line intended to offend the scruples of the devout, and even consented to apologize for what he had said in questioning the interpretation usually put on the beginning of Genesis, when he found that the priests had taken, and taught their flocks to take, alarm at his freedom. Duclos, too, whose studies and contributions were generally of an historical character, in the very articles on the manners of the age, and other subjects which might have seemed to offer the strongest temptation to display laxity of principle, was careful to abstain even from such suggestions to vice as are sometimes contained in satire, and executed his task with such strict propriety that Louis, the infamy of whose own life did not debar him from intervals of sound judgment on the conduct and character of others, pronounced his contributions those of a worthy man. Some, on the other hand, were worse even than D'Alembert or Voltaire; more shameless

in their blasphemy ; the worst of all being a renegade priest, an Abbé de Prades, who compared the miracles of Christ to the cures of the heathen *Æsculapius* ; denied the immortality of the soul ; and, that religion might not be too much honoured by being the sole object of his abuse, denounced all established authority, especially that of a king, with such vehemence, that the Government, thinking that, if it had no regard for the honour of God, it might at least be excused for caring for its own dignity, issued a warrant against him, and would have chastised his impiety or disloyalty with a life-long imprisonment if he had not been warned in time to seek an asylum in the congenial court of Frederic.

But, in spite of the contrast presented to the writings of D'Alembert and Voltaire by the best of their associates, and the warning afforded both to them and to their pupils by the danger incurred by the worst, the sentiments which they advanced, powerfully seconded as they were by the lives of the king and most of his courtiers, male and female, gradually made their way ; and a general irreligion became the tone of the upper classes : though had they recollected that the lower classes also were imbibing all their impatience of moral restraint, and learning to relish doctrines such as those advanced by Rousseau and De Prades, of the natural equality of all mankind, they might have been checked, if not sobered, by a reflection on the danger to which the propagation of such opinions exposed their order. But the nobles, as a body, were as heedless as they were heartless. Looking on religion only as a restraint on, and a silent reproof of, their habitual profligacy, they forgot that it is also the one sure bulwark of worldly authority and of the gradations of social rank. With these

feelings they cheered on the assailants of religion ; and, as of all ministers of religion the Jesuits were the most prominent and the most influential, they especially encouraged those who dilated on their overbearing disposition, their systematic artifice and treachery, and their real or imputed offences of still darker hue. And it happened at this moment that they had been just proved to be guilty of at least a connivance at crimes which the established government of every country was alike interested in crushing the very idea of out of the hearts of its subjects. A conspiracy had recently been formed in Portugal to murder King Joseph, a sovereign whose detestable profligacy too closely resembled the habits of Louis himself for his danger not to be looked on with peculiar interest at Versailles. It was established beyond all question that some Jesuit priests, of characters fair in other respects, had been consulted about and had countenanced the attempt at his assassination. It was not so clearly proved, but it was universally believed that Damiens had not been left without similar encouragement. Louis therefore dreaded them as his personal enemies ; he also hated them as the partisans of his son, whom, ever since the illness which had led him to invest him with a temporary authority, he had regarded with greater jealousy and suspicion than ever. His mistress cherished the same feelings towards them for the same reasons ; and was moreover exasperated against them further by personal injuries, since it was to them that she attributed her removal from the palace at the time when the king was trembling at the possible results of Damiens' assault. The Duke de Choiseul disliked them, partly from his natural imperiousness of temper, and partly from a belief that they were plotting the overthrow of his authority.

His arrogance was such that he had ventured openly to insult the dauphin, telling him that though fate might make him his subject, nothing could ever make him his servant;* and the consciousness that he had thus committed himself inevitably led him to suspect the enmity of those who were counting the hours till their patron, whom he had defied, should become their king. The body of the people also, though the clergy, with perhaps the tacit assent of Archbishop Beaumont, had ceased to require certificates of acceptance of the obnoxious Bull as a condition of admission to the sacraments, had not forgotten the tyranny which they had exercised in that matter; and, as they attributed it wholly to the instigation of the Jesuits, were perhaps more bitter against them on that account than either Louis, or the marchioness, or the minister.

Indeed, the person least inclined to proceed to active measures against them was the king himself. His very fear of them disinclined him to meddle with them, by leading him to exaggerate the danger of such a step; while there were also moments when he looked on them as a society which might even be useful, if not to himself, at least to his successor, as always opposed to the Parliament, and as too likely to be needed as a counterpoise to that body in the struggle which he foresaw.† But the consideration which always finally prevailed with him, was which course would give him the least present trouble? And while

* Besenval, i. 253.

† "Il existe une lettre de Louis XV., adressée à la Duchesse de Choiseul, dans laquelle il lui dit, 'J'ai eu bien de la peine à me tirer d'affaire avec les parlemens pendant mon règne : mais que mon petit fils y prenne garde ; ils pourront bien mettre sa couronne en danger.'"—*Mine. de Staël*, "Considérations sur la Révol. Française," vol. i. c. 3.

he was making a feeble resistance to the importunities of his mistress, a transaction unconnected with either religion or politics suddenly brought great additional odium upon them, stamping them with the character of pecuniary meanness if not of absolute dishonesty. One of the brotherhood, the Father Lavalette, having been appointed to superintend its interests at Martinique, had appropriated the funds placed at his disposal for missionary purposes, to the establishment of an extensive and lucrative trade. While the speculation flourished, the superiors of the order in France manifested no displeasure at such a misappropriation of their treasures, and shared in the profits. But the war with England was fatal to it: the British cruisers swept off the merchantmen belonging to the holy father as mercilessly as those of any ordinary layman; the business soon became bankrupt, Lavalette himself estimating his debts at three millions of francs; and the Society instantly repudiated all share in such a liability. But their disavowal of Lavalette's proceedings was not suffered to pass unquestioned. Merchants of high standing at Marseilles were among his creditors, and saw their own solvency threatened if they could not procure from the whole body the payment which was not obtainable from the individual. Their application was met by a proposal which seemed to men in dread of instant ruin, more insulting than a positive refusal. The Jesuits declined to give them a farthing of money, but expressed a willingness to offer up a mass for them. The merchants then appealed to the law, and the Society for once failed in sagacity as egregiously as in honesty. They had hitherto kept the rules and constitution of their order inviolably secret, but they now put in a plea which compelled them to produce them. They

alleged that they could not be liable for the debts incurred by Lavalette in trade, because by their constitution no member of their society was permitted to engage in worldly traffic; and, as the Grand Chamber of Parliament, before whom the cause came, pronounced itself unable to judge of the validity of the plea without the production of the documents relied on to prove it, they produced them to the scrutiny of a body always hostile to their principles and pretensions. They soon found they had better have paid the money demanded of them without demur, had it been ten times the amount. The Parliament without hesitation declared the whole Society in France a partner in Lavalette's enterprise, and ordered full payment of the merchants' claims; and then, proceeding to an examination of the general constitution of the order, condemned its fundamental principles as inconsistent with the loyalty due to kings, and with the tranquillity of any state. The prejudices with which the Parliament had entered on the investigation were perhaps revealed by their edict, which had compelled the closing of all the Jesuit colleges in the kingdom during its prosecution. But the final decision, which the edict foreshadowed, was not only in harmony with the general feeling of the kingdom, but cannot be pronounced unwarranted by logical inference, or the still more irresistible evidence of proved facts. It was not always an easy matter for even a devout Roman Catholic to reconcile the loyalty due to his king with the submission claimed by the Pope. But the Jesuit had set up a second spiritual ruler, in obedience to whom he had occasionally ventured to resist even the Pope, the general of his order. The most vigorous king was at best only the third and lowest in the triumvirate of his masters; and,

however problematical might be their complicity in the crime of Damiens, there was no doubt whatever that the two last Henri's had been their victims, and that in other countries they had planned and prompted similar atrocities on a larger scale.

Still Louis hesitated. Finding the Parliament unanimous in its condemnation of them, he consulted the bishops; and as they, entertaining very different opinions from their brethren of the preceding century,* were almost unanimous in their favour, he endeavoured to find a middle path by enforcing alterations in their constitution which might meet the objections of the lawyers. Consistently with their principles, it would have been impossible for the Jesuits to recognise his authority so to remodel the rules. But this question was not raised, for the Parliament refused to register the edict of modification; and, as all the king's advisers, male and female, were in this matter on its side, he had not resolution to have recourse to the old expedient of a Bed of Justice. Yet so insensible was he to his dignity as a king that, though in fact the influence to which he was yielding was that of his mistress and her partisans, he preferred letting it seem as if he were acting under the compulsion of the Parliament. He withdrew the alterations. But, if he hoped that this reluctant concession would satisfy the enemies of the order, he found himself mistaken. The Parliament indeed had no means of or pretext for taking any more active or aggressive steps against the Society, but the marchioness and Choiseul gave him no rest till he had granted all their wishes; and at last, in

* Macaulay, c. vi., does not hesitate to pronounce the doctrine of the Jesuits almost as different from that of Bossuet as from that of Luther.

August, 1762, comforting himself with the idea that it would be worth while to see Father Desmarets, his Jesuit confessor, in a new dress, he signed an edict finally condemning the whole Society, reducing them to the condition of the other secular clergy, and commanding the confiscation and sale of all the property which they held in France as an ecclesiastical corporation. The general indifference with which the edict was received, was a striking proof how greatly the Jesuits had lost their former influence over the minds of men. One or two provincial parliaments showed no anxiety to register it, and the Archbishop of Paris published a furious denunciation of it as destructive of all religion. But, when the Jesuits themselves re-echoed the assertion, and sought to raise an outcry against the Paris Parliament as having prejudged their cause, they found no support among any class of the people at large; and the Great Chamber, treating their clamours as seditious, issued an ordinance requiring every member to take an oath of renunciation of the order within a week, on pain of banishment. The greater portion of them gladly caught at the opportunity of appearing as martyrs, and refused the oath; and for some time the contest between them and the Parliament continued, while they paraded their disregard of both ordinance and threats, and the Parliament repeated both. At last Louis himself interfered once more, adopting the decree of the Parliament, and summarily banishing from the kingdom all who continued members of the Society, though those who desired to remain as private individuals were permitted to do so, and were allotted a small pension out of its former revenues. Before the end of his reign his example was followed not only in the bigoted kingdoms of Spain and Naples, but even

at Rome itself. In 1769, Clement XIII., who had protected the Jesuits as far as he could, died, and was succeeded by Lorenzo Ganganelli, who owed his elevation to the disapproval with which he was understood to regard them; and who, after a decent interval, to give time for an apparently careful examination of the whole question, in 1773 finally abolished the order altogether, giving additional poignancy to the blow by justifying the act as one essential to the tranquillity of Christendom.

In pressing the abolition of the order with such eagerness, Choiseul had hardly been more influenced by his desire to please Madame de Pompadour than by his expectation that the funds placed by the seizure of the Jesuits' property at the disposal of the state would help to relieve the treasury from some of the burdens which were overwhelming it. The distresses of all classes but the highest had become so entirely their normal state, that the necessity or possibility of giving them any substantial relief never occurred to him; but the utmost ingenuity of the financial ministers was daily getting more and more unequal to the task of providing ready money for the expenses of the Government or for, what preceded the claims of the Government, the personal expenses of the Court, much more for the daily demands of an extensive and protracted war. The treasury was empty, not for want of a variety of projects for filling it, for the finance ministers, as one after the other succumbed to the difficulties of his post, were changed with an unparalleled frequency, of itself fatal to the efficiency of any department. We have mentioned the appointment of Moreau de Séchelles in the summer of 1754; he held it till 1756, and in the next four years had four successors: M. Moras, M. de

Boulogne, M. de Silhouette, and M. Bertin. Silhouette, though his tenure of office was the shortest, scarcely reaching eight months, had shown great energy and courage; his ideas of finance were sound, leading him to endeavour to balance the national accounts by reducing the expenditure rather than by increasing the taxes. But so many people and classes suffered by his economical reforms that he excited an opposition which no one could withstand. Louis himself, though at his instance he consented to send some of his plate to the mint, was far from approving the sacrifice, and when the minister, by the proposal of a new subsidy, comprehending several fresh taxes, provoked the Parliament once more to refuse registration to the edict, Louis sacrificed him at once, and gladly installed Bertin in his place. Bertin was a miracle of tenacity, for he continued in office nearly four years. But each year added to his difficulties. Though the property-tax had been gradually raised to 15 per cent., that vast augmentation of the burdens of the people had been found insufficient. Each year since the commencement of the war had seen a fresh loan contracted. The interest of each loan, as no other expense was diminished, raised the expenditure more and more above the revenue, while the very coin in which the taxes were to be paid began to disappear from the kingdom. Bertin, like De Silhouette, had set out with professions of economy, to which he added a promise to remove, or at least to lessen, the inequalities with which taxation pressed on the different classes of citizens; but he found himself equally unable to fulfil either of the expectations which he had held out. Though he had owed his promotion to the personal favour of the mistress, he soon discovered that any attempt to check the expenditure of the

court would deprive him of her protection. The nobles and clergy were as determined as ever to submit to no diminution of these exemptions, and at last he saw no alternative but the old spendthrift resource to which each of his more recent predecessors had also been driven, of anticipating the revenue of the next year.*

Yet we must not blame him, nor any individual among his predecessors since Fleury's death, for his failure. The task which they were called on to perform, with such a king and such a system of government, was impracticable. The finances were in such a condition that unless a remedy were applied the state must sooner or later be ruined. Yet in his search for a remedy the finance minister could not take a single step in any direction without finding impediments which he could not remove, and enemies whom he could not resist. If, in the hope of bringing the income and the outgoings to a level, he proposed to diminish the expenditure of the court, the whole court, king, mistress, courtiers, and even his brother ministers, who had been raised to their places by mere court favour, pronounced the notion one which could not be entertained for a moment. Did he recommend the abolition of exemptions, the whole of the exempted classes, the nobles, clergy, and the Parliament, as we have seen, rose as one man to defeat the plans and crush the projector. Even if he sought such small augmentation of the available revenue as might be procured from an improved system of keeping and checking the accounts, and diminishing the expense of collection, he raised in arms a whole troop of intendants, sub-intendants, collectors, and deputy-collectors,

* *Lacretelle*, iv. 79.

who were amassing large fortunes under the existing want of system, which facilitated every kind of extortion and speculation, and who, though individually insignificant, when united formed a body whose enmity was as formidable as that of the other classes, especially since, as they were the only people of practical experience in their department, it was difficult to do without them. The Parliament denounced equally every expedient proposed, whether in the way of taxation or regulation, and in every case were equally disregarded. They had been somewhat too proud of their asserted right of remonstrance when the Regent, by his compliments on their wisdom, had seemed to sanction it, and they had used it so untiringly that they had blunted its edge. Weak as was the monarch, and vacillating as were most of his ministers, no other reply was ever vouchsafed to their most positive refusals to register an edict than was contained in the holding of a Bed of Justice to compel their obedience; and it was probably more the caprice of Madame de Pompadour, who was apt to tire of her favourites, than any political motive, that in the autumn of 1763 had led to Bertin's dismissal, and to the appointment of M. de Laverdy, who was one of the councillors of the Grand Chamber.

He was energetic and honest, but he had neither originality of mind to enable him to devise new expedients, nor much judgment in applying old ones. He renewed the old professions of retrenchment; held out hopes of procuring no inconsiderable sums from farmers of the revenue whom he expected to convict of corrupt malpractices: and prevailed on Louis himself to hint at a reduction of the court expenditure, and at reforms of other kinds, by a public assurance that his intention was and at all times had been to regulate

his conduct in strict conformity with the laws of the kingdom. But such a declaration, which was taken to promise a redress of all grievances that could not be traced to some oppressive law, and which, therefore, appeared to acknowledge the existence of abuses and hardships, appeared of necessity also to invite a free enumeration of those evils which pressed on the different classes, and especially on the lower orders; and the different parliaments, eagerly putting themselves forward as spokesmen, drew pictures of such universal misery that even foreigners who watched the course of events conceived that a country in which such a state of things prevailed as they saw described in them could not be far from a sweeping revolution. They assured the king that the misery of the great body of the people was so all-penetrating and so severe that fancy could not exaggerate nor endurance support it; the demands of the public revenue ate up everything; town and country districts suffered alike; while so especially and disproportionately heavy were the taxes on small transactions that no class suffered equally with the poorest of all, which, living from hand to mouth, was naturally confined to retail dealings of the smallest amount. Onerous and oppressive above all other imposts was the tax on the universally necessary article of salt, the "gabelle," as it was called: the cottagers were not even allowed to decide for themselves how much salt they required, but the farmers of the tax compelled every parish to take such a quantity as they assumed to be proportioned to its population; and, on the distribution of it among the parishioners, likewise forced even the poorest to purchase or at least to pay the tax upon the weight which, according to their calculation, he was bound to consume. Under such a system of taxation, both in imposition and levy as

absurd as it was oppressive, numbers could only meet the exactions of the tax-gatherer by the sale of all their means of subsistence: of their crops, of their cattle, of the tools and implements by which they raised their crops. In every province numbers perished of actual starvation; and the Parliament represented to the king, with unanswerable force and truth, that he himself as king was personally interested in their fate, since those who were thus swept off were, as the cultivators of the soil in days of peace, and its possible soldiers and defenders in times of war, among the most valuable of his subjects, a class which no sovereign and no country could afford to lose.

Louis, however, was not to be moved by any considerations which depended on contingencies and bore only on the future. He condescended, indeed, when holding one Bed of Justice, to express his regret for the weight of the burdens imposed on the people; but he was as peremptory as ever in his enforcement of the registration of his financial edicts, nor did the restoration of peace bring with it the removal of a single war tax. If he had any feeling whatever about the matter, it was one of displeasure with the Parliament for the freedom of its remonstrances, and with his ministers for not discovering some mode of taxation which might avoid giving it an opportunity of making them. But his displeasure had no result. The Parliament, indeed, began to lose its hold over the respect of the people, but it was through its own violence and injustice. One of our greatest English dramatists represents the butler who did not dare reply to his master comfort himself by kicking the footboy:* so the French Parliament vented its wrath at having its

* See the beginning of "The Rivals."

remonstrances disregarded by the king on the people, on that portion of them, at least, which could possibly be brought under its lash as a court of justice. And some of its proceedings were so monstrous as to give Voltaire occasion for holding them also up to general obloquy. It encouraged the renewal of attacks on the scattered bodies of Huguenots, who still in the mountainous districts of the south held secret meetings for the worship of God in the manner pointed out by their consciences; and hung a minister named Rochette, and beheaded some of his congregation as rebels. They were the last persons avowedly put to death for their religion in France. But in the prosecution of others for pretended crimes, whose real offence was adherence to Huguenot doctrines, the Toulouse Parliament outran that of Paris in atrocity. In that city a trader of high respectability, named Jean Calas, had a son subject to constitutional melancholy, in a fit of which he put an end to his existence. The Parliament contrived to have the father accused before itself of having murdered him because he had shown an inclination to be converted to Catholicism. It put his whole family, and even a guest who chanced to be staying in his house, to the torture, to procure testimony in support of the charge; and though not a shadow of evidence could be extracted from them, and though the prisoner brought abundant proof of his complete innocence, it condemned him to be broken on the wheel, confiscated his whole property, and banished his surviving son. A few months afterwards they encouraged the invention of an exactly similar charge against a man called Servin, whose daughter some Catholic priests had carried off from him and thrown into a convent, where she drowned herself. Servin luckily escaped before he could be arrested,

and fled to Geneva, where Voltaire, who was then living in that district, gave him an asylum, and where he was at the same time sheltering the widow and daughters of the unhappy Calas. Nor was his beneficence limited to affording them the protection of his roof. By unwearied and resolute exertions, such as those by which he afterwards established the innocence of Lally, he procured the reversal of the sentence pronounced against Calas himself; his property was restored to his heirs, and the municipality was further compelled to pay the family a large sum as an indemnification for the injustice and barbarity with which they had been treated.

But Choiseul still held his post. In spite of the king's secret dissatisfaction, habit had given the minister an influence over him which was too firmly fixed for him to be able to throw it off. The duke had not, indeed, the name of prime minister, which had now been disused for several years; but he had all the power which could have been implied by the title. He was minister of war, minister of the marine, and he had been also at the same time minister for foreign affairs till he chose to lay aside that office and confer it on his cousin, the Duke de Praslin, who had no will or opinions but his. Even the death of Madame de Pompadour, though it was to her that he originally owed his elevation, did not shake his tenure of power. As has been mentioned before, her health had long been bad, and the maladies which had impaired it were aggravated by the efforts she made to conceal them, that she might retain to the last the political power of which she was so proud. In April, 1764, they suddenly became more violent, and in a few days she died; Louis's conduct on the occasion being a strange medley of affection and indifference. Though

a somewhat ludicrous etiquette had established a rule that no one but a member of the royal family should be suffered to die in a royal palace, yet the moment her illness assumed a serious aspect he caused her to be removed to Versailles. But when it had proved fatal he did not seem to regret her, or lose his cheerfulness for a moment; the only remark which he was heard to make on the subject being a jest on the stormy weather which marked the day of her funeral, as rendering it very unpleasant for her to take the air in.

He had become morose with everybody but a few of his most profligate courtiers, with whom he at times exchanged jokes and confidences that drove every one who pretended to decency out of the saloon; but of more active sensuality he seemed weary, and passed his days partly in examining mechanical inventions, for which he had always had a turn, and even in the occasional working of the turning lathe or the printing press; partly and more frequently in prying into the affairs of his subjects, especially those about the court, opening their letters and resealing them, that they might be forwarded without suspicion. His evenings were devoted to gambling for enormous stakes, harmless to himself, since he paid his losses out of the national exchequer, but ruinous to his companions; though occasionally, when some one was ruined whose society he could not afford to lose, he would make him some amends by giving him a pension or a government. The next year, however, when death becoming busy among his own family began to alarm him for himself, he for a time laid aside these habits, and seemed inclined to exercises of devotion, giving frequent attendance at sermons, and apparently pondering on and affected by

the truths which they inculcated. For, as the last years of Louis XIV. had been darkened by domestic sorrows, so now again death began to lay his hand with unusual heaviness on the royal house. The dauphin was the first to go, though he was only thirty-six years old. His health had long been declining; but, in spite of his increasing weakness, at the beginning of the year 1765 he had taken the command of a camp which had been formed at Compiègne; the weather was bad, and the exposure, and the fatigue of superintending the manœuvres, brought his maladies to a head, and in December they carried him off. Louis did not affect to be concerned at his loss from any affection which he bore him; but he regretted him politically, looking on him as a check on the encroachments of the Parliament,* and feeling that, in the struggle which he saw approaching, his grandson, who was now become his next heir, and who was but a child, would be but little able to moderate the violence of the different factions, or to uphold the prerogatives of the crown against the attacks of its enemies.

Two months afterwards he lost his father-in-law by a peculiarly shocking accident. Extreme old age, for he was now eighty-eight, had reduced Stanislaus to a state of great feebleness, and when one morning his dressing-gown caught fire, in his endeavours to put out the flames he fell forward into the fire himself, with his hands among the burning coals. Etiquette as strict as that of the Escorial reigned in Lorraine;

* He told the Duke de Choiseul "que la perte de son fils affectait peu son cœur; qu'il le regrettait cependant beaucoup, par la peur qu'en avaient les parlemens, qui désormais, n'ayant plus de peur, ne pourraient plus être contenus." And in allusion to his grandson having now become his heir, he exclaimed, "Pauvre France! un roi âgé de cinquante-cinq ans, et un dauphin de onze."—Besenval, i. 364-5.

there was a soldier on guard in the next room, but though he heard the crash and smelt the flames, he could not venture to go to his king's relief, but called his body-servants, and before they came the poor old man was so fearfully burnt that his recovery was hopeless. Louis, however, was easily consoled for his loss by the acquisition of his duchies of Lorraine and Bar, which now became formally annexed to the French crown. But when in 1767 his son's widow died, he was really startled. She was a princess of the most amiable disposition, of the most sincere virtue and piety; and as, since the death of the marchioness, he had associated with her and the other princesses more than formerly, she had laboured with diligent delicacy to strengthen in his mind those feelings of devotion of which she flattered herself that she discovered the seeds. It added to his uneasiness that many of the courtiers ascribed her death to poison; not that there was the slightest ground for the suspicion, but that the concurrence of so many deaths seemed in itself a suspicious circumstance. They even ventured to impute the guilt to Choiseul, and one of the cabal, the Marquis de la Vauguyon, who, though utterly frivolous and worthless, had by hypocritical pretences to piety, so wormed his way into the confidence of the late dauphin that he had been appointed by him governor of his children, ventured to whisper the accusation to the king himself. Louis probably did not really credit it, but it made an impression on the mind of the youthful dauphin from which it was never entirely eradicated.

The next year was marked by the death of Queen Marie herself. In spite of her efforts at patience and resignation her husband's neglect had sunk into her heart, and worn her out. She died in June, 1768;

and now at last Louis seemed for a moment affected with real sorrow. He threw himself on her lifeless body, kissed her cold cheek, and day after day mingled his tears with those of his daughters. But it was only for a moment, and his recovery from his sorrow, if not strange for such a man, was characteristically disgraceful. It seemed as if the display of sensibility and decency into which he had been surprised was a feeling so unnatural as of itself to produce a reaction. He once more withdrew himself from the society of the princesses, and plunged into the lowest debauchery: reopened the Deer Park, which for the last three or four years had been shut up, and of which he had seemed to be wearied, and established a new titular mistress, as much lower in origin, manners, and outward decency than Madame de Pompadour, as that wretched woman had been inferior to the Duchess de Châteauroux. A woman of the name of Lange, of extraordinary beauty, had a year or two before been picked out of the streets by a ruined noble, the Count du Barri, to attract victims to a gaming table which was his only resource for a livelihood. It occurred to him and to the king's confidential servant who managed such matters for his master, that he might make her still more profitable by selling her to Louis. Louis agreed, as he would have agreed to any one whom those about him recommended. As it was necessary that she should have a husband and a title, and as the Count du Barri, having a wife already, could not become the husband, his younger brother took that office on himself, and the lady the moment after the ceremony received a patent as Countess du Barri, and a lodging in the palace. Profligate and debased as the generality of the nobles who thronged the court were, even they for the most part raised their voices

against such a degradation of the royal dignity ; some of them not forbearing to address biting jests to the monarch himself, of which he, callous rather than good-humoured, admitted the truth. The high-born ladies, even those with whose characters scandal had made most free, took every opportunity to show open scorn of the new favourite ; and one of his daughters, the Princess Louise, though she had been brought to receive Madame de Pompadour, now fled to a Carmelite convent and took the veil in preference to associating with her. But Louis cared not for opposition ; he was resolved to distinguish her by all the honours that had been conferred on Madame de Pompadour. By solicitations to some of the ladies of the court, and threats to others, he prevailed on a few to consent to countenance his choice. Richelieu, who judged rightly that no dishonour could be lower than that to which in times past he had often descended, lent his sedulous co-operation to overcome their scruples. After a few weeks the Countess du Barri was formally presented at court, dined in public at the royal table, and, following the example of her predecessor, began to exercise the same undisputed authority over the affairs of the State and the composition of the Government.

The first result of her interference was the dismissal of Choiseul, who, not having the same reason for complaisance towards her that he had had in the case of Madame de Pompadour, who on her part had shown as much favour to him as to Louis himself, headed the opposition to her promotion and recognition at court. He was elated at some recent acquisitions of territory which he had procured for his sovereign, and which he looked on as all-convincing proofs of his capacity ; and he was also full of projects of future

conquest, expecting that the wars by which alone they could be achieved would render him indispensable. He flattered himself, therefore, that he was strong enough to stand alone, forgetting that, where the character of the king and the whole system of government was as hollow as in France, there could be no solid foundation to rest upon. He did not overrate the importance of his acquisitions; one of which, though no one could yet have suspected it, was destined to have a permanent influence on the history of his country, and indeed of the world. The possession of Avignon and the little county of Venaissin by the Pope had long been a source of mortification and envy to French statesmen. Louis XIV., as we have seen,* had at one time seized them, though he had subsequently restored them, and Choiseul thought it would be not only a credit but a substantial triumph for his administration to annex to his sovereign's dominions permanently a district which that monarch had been unable to retain. There were so many points in dispute between a king of France and the Pope, that it was never difficult to find a ground of quarrel; and the excessive arrogance and imprudence of Clement XIII. put one in Choiseul's way just as he was beginning to seek one. The duke had found his popularity in his own country so greatly enhanced by the expulsion of the Jesuits, that he was eager to establish a similar claim on the gratitude of other nations; and exerted the influence of France over the other branches of the House of Bourbon with such zeal and success, that, as has been already mentioned, they all followed the example of the head of their family, Louis XV. The Jesuits were driven

* Vol. ii. p. 204.

from Spain, from Naples, and from Parma and from Piacenza, of which Ferdinand of Bourbon was duke. Clement was exasperated beyond measure at these insults to a society which he esteemed the best bulwark of the Holy See; but the kings of Spain or Naples were too formidable for him openly to break with in their cause. To chastise the Duke of Parma appeared less dangerous; and as some of his predecessors had claimed a feudal superiority over his duchies, he now claimed them as a part of the domain of the Church, and by his authority as sovereign lord annulled all Ferdinand's proceedings, and threatened him and his advisers with excommunication. Choiseul ordered the Marquis d'Aubeterre, Louis's ambassador at Rome, to make a vigorous remonstrance against such insolence to a sovereign prince; as also against the revival of so obsolete a claim as that to the duchies, which had been recognised by numerous treaties as an independent principality. And, with that best of logic for a powerful kingdom, which finds redress for the injuries done to its neighbour in exacting advantages for itself, he sent a body of troops, under the Marquis de Rochechouart, to overrun the Venaissin, and compelled the Parliament of Aix to publish a decree uniting the county, with the city of Avignon, to the French crown.

Choiseul's second acquisition could not be said to be made at the expense of any other potentate, for it was purchased at a liberal price of its former masters, who had long been unable to keep it in subjection without foreign assistance and the constant presence of a military force, and who were probably glad to find a way of getting rid of it which did not involve an admission of their inability to retain it. In a

former chapter* we have mentioned the revolt of the Corsicans against Genoa, and the pacification which was brought about by the intervention of Fleury and the Austrians; but the Genoese by their faithless violation of the treaty provoked fresh outbreaks, and at last there arose among the Corsicans a man of noble birth, and well qualified by his talents, both political and military, and by his virtues of courage, resolution, and absolute disinterestedness, to make insurrection formidable. Pascal Paoli wanted but a wider field, and more favorable circumstances, to rival the fame of Washington, whom in many points of his character he strongly resembled. He saw that there could be no tranquillity or security for his country except in her independence; and under his guidance the Corsicans almost succeeded in altogether throwing off the yoke. They expelled the Genoese from every part of the island except two or three fortresses; and everywhere else Paoli established a regular and orderly government. At last, in 1768, the Genoese applied to Choiseul, offering, as in the time of Fleury, a large sum to cover the expense of the aid they solicited. He preferred making a market of their necessities in another way, and, instead of taking money for the employment of the French troops in their cause, proposed to give them a still larger sum in purchase of the island. The negotiation was conducted with great secrecy for some time, from Choiseul's fear lest England, with which he had no inclination for a renewal of war, should interpose to mar it; and certainly no transaction could call for more vigorous remonstrance, or

* See *ante*, 26.

could more justify war, if a nation could ever be justified in going to war for any object but its own vital interests, than the sale of a free people as if they were cattle at a market. However it was soon ascertained that no active interference on the part of England was to be dreaded. Not that there was not a party in the British Parliament who would willingly have gone any lengths to prevent the transaction. Burke, whose great powers were beginning to be discerned, declared that the idea of Corsica becoming a province of France was terrible to him; and Sir Charles Saunders openly expressed his opinion in favour of war; but they had few followers, and the Government was weak and sufficiently occupied with its own affairs: for it was just at this time that the illness of Lord Chatham, the real prime minister, compelled him to retire altogether from public business, though he did not resign his office, and the ministry, originally as badly composed as possible, was divided and perplexed, without any presiding genius to guide or keep it together. The ambassador at Paris, Lord Rochford, was indeed instructed to expostulate with Choiseul, and to protest against the annexation; but the duke had good information of the real intentions of the British cabinet, and a protest which he knew would never be more than a protest he could afford to disregard. He felt it more necessary to dissemble with the Corsicans themselves. When he despatched the troops which were to take possession of the island, he pretended that they were meant only to give effect to his mediation between them and their Genoese masters. Nor was it till the Genoese began to perform their part of the treaty, surrendering to the French general, the Count de Marbœuf, the few fortresses which they still retained, that Paoli, who at

first had placed implicit confidence in Choiseul's assurances, was awakened from his delusion.

Then commenced one of the most singular contests recorded in history. Paoli called his countrymen to arms, and, though all the men, women, and children of the island did not amount to 150,000 souls, they obeyed his call, and prepared for war with the greatest military power in Europe, which within the last few years had had on foot more than one army outnumbering their entire population. Nor did their resolution in action disgrace their boldness of decision. Though refusing any open countenance or assistance to their efforts, the English Government secretly sent them a supply of arms and ammunition ; and, availing himself of his superior knowledge of the country, Paoli occupied the mountain passes in the northern part of the island, and posted his men with such skill that in several fierce combats he inflicted far greater loss on Marbœuf than he sustained, though he was gradually forced down to the southern district. Marbœuf sent for reinforcements, and the Marquis de Chauvelin, who had been originally destined for the command, but had been prevented by illness from assuming it, joined him with several regiments. For some time, however, he had worse fortune than his colleague. Paoli, still clinging to the mountains which traverse the whole length of Corsica, not only often defied him in positions which were quite unassailable, but sometimes descended from his high ground to become the assailant ; more than once defeated detached divisions ; on one occasion drove back the whole French army with heavy loss ; and by well-concerted enterprises recovered Loreto and Borgo de Mariana, two important strongholds which he had formerly evacuated. The war, which had begun at midsummer,

was maintained without cessation or respite throughout the winter. Chauvelin was superseded by the Count de Vaux, a veteran of great experience and reputation, who brought with him a fresh force of upwards of twenty thousand men, among whom was a young officer named Dumouriez, who had already attracted notice by great military talents, and who, having previously served in Corsica, had almost as much knowledge of the country as Paoli himself. Guided by his information and advice De Vaux divided his men into four bodies, each by itself strong enough to be formidable to Paoli's whole army, and, landing them at different points on the coast, directed them all to march simultaneously upon Corte in the centre of the island, so as to sweep it in every direction. Still Paoli maintained his undaunted attitude. Reduced as his little band was by its frequent conflicts, he beat back one French division and cut another to pieces; but the rest reached Corte, and carried it by assault. And the Corsican people, though their spirit was still unsubdued, confessed to themselves that further resistance was hopeless, and submitted to their new masters. Paoli escaped on board an English ship, and retired to England, where he was received with great honour. George III. of his own accord granted him a pension; and when, at more than eighty years of age, he sank into the grave, a burial-place was afforded him among the tombs of some of the worthiest of England's own sons in the great national cemetery of Westminster Abbey. A few of those who had been most prominent among his followers emigrated with him. One of his principal partisans, who is said also to have been a relation, Charles Buonaparte, was only prevented from following him by the influence of an uncle who was Archdeacon of

Ajaccio. Had he carried out his first purpose, the subsequent fortunes of France and the whole world would have been changed ; for two months afterwards his wife was delivered of his second son, Napoleon, who was thus born a citizen of France, instead of, as at one time seemed more probable, a subject of King George.

Choiseul prided himself still more on a peaceful arrangement which he negotiated before the end of the year which had witnessed the reduction of Corsica, and which, indeed, seemed to be at once a proof of and a security for the solidity of his power. Before the king had become entangled by Madame du Barri, he had contemplated proposing a second marriage to him ; but when such a recommendation seemed likely to be unpalatable, he so far modified his tactics as to make the young dauphin their object, and obtained leave from Louis to propose to the Court of Austria to cement the alliance which Kaunitz had inaugurated twelve years before by giving Marie Antoinette, the youngest and fairest of the archduchesses, in marriage to the heir of the French crown. Maria Teresa gladly accepted the offer, little dreaming what a fate she was preparing for the child of her fondest preference ; and in May, 1770, the marriage took place. Heathen poets would have seen in a circumstance of singular horror which accompanied it, an omen of the consequences of this most promising but most unhappy of unions. In spite of the disorder of the finances, and of the fact that the poorer classes were suffering an unusual pressure of distress from a bad harvest, which had raised corn to a famine price, the king, prompted by his new mistress, resolved to celebrate it with entertainments which should extinguish the recollection of the most sumptuous festivities of his great-grand-

father's reign. Versailles was thrown open for a series of balls, masquerades, and suppers, at which the most perverse ingenuity was constantly kept on the rack to devise fresh varieties of extravagance, and on the last day of the month the city of Paris was to add its contribution in the shape of an entertainment which the citizens trusted would surpass even the most exuberant lavishness of the sovereign. It was crowned with an enormous exhibition of fireworks, which took place in the large square which had just received the name of the Place Louis XV., from an equestrian statue of the king which was its central ornament. It happened that one side of the square was blocked up with scaffolding and beams, brought there for some of the buildings of the Rue Royale, which was on the point of completion; and in other parts ditches, drains, and deep cuttings connected with the work of the builders, obstructed the free passage of the crowd. Other avenues of approach, and especially the quay between the square and the river, were thronged with carriages, so that the dense multitude of spectators on foot were by one obstacle or another completely hemmed in. But no one heeded this; every eye and every mind was fixed on the fireworks. Presently, as they were let off in quick succession, they set fire to some of the stages, but no one at first suspected anything wrong, and, as the light wood-work blazed up, the general idea was that the artist was presenting them with a novel effect. But it was soon seen that the conflagration was becoming too extensive to have been designed. It spread, and when it caught the builders' scaffolding one universal panic succeeded the previous admiration. Every one sought to flee, but no one could move; as the vast multitude surged to and fro in vain efforts to withdraw, many

fell, and their shrieks, as they were trampled under their companions' feet, added to the consternation. The confusion and horror of this scene were augmented by the atrocities of gangs of thieves and cut-throats, who, like ill-omened birds of prey, hastened to the scene of destruction. The soldiers of the guard who had been placed on the outskirts to preserve order, had taken advantage of their position to escape in safety; so that the mob was left wholly to itself, and its own eagerness to move only made it the more helpless, and aggravated its sufferings. Those who seemed at first more fortunate than their companions in getting to the outskirts only rushed into other dangers; many were trampled under foot by the terrified coach-horses, as unable to advance or retire as themselves; many were pushed by those behind them into the river and drowned. When at last the place was in some degree cleared, 133 bodies already dead were picked up; a still greater number were found with broken limbs, crushed, mangled, and dying. Many were seen floating down the Seine; and the estimate of those who had met their deaths in different ways was rarely stated under twelve hundred persons.

The king heard of this sad catastrophe with shameful indifference. But the young couple in whose honour the festivities had been celebrated which had had so sad a termination, showed no such apathy. They drew out of the treasury the sum appropriated for their monthly allowance, and sent it at once to the municipal authorities, with letters full of humanity and sympathy, to be distributed among those who had been bereaved of relatives who had been their chief support; for, in such a crush, the stout man was as helpless as the most delicate woman or tender child, and many of the victims were hardy workmen whose

loss left their parents or widows and orphans destitute. The genuine sensibility evinced by the prince and princess won them the hearts of the citizens, little accustomed, especially since the death of the dauphin's father, to any tokens of consideration from the royal family. It made the marriage popular, and Choiseul flattered himself that some portion of its popularity would be reflected on him as its contriver, and would aid him in defeating the machinations of his enemies; for he was well aware that he had given deep offence to the mistress by refusing to become her lover. Besides her he had other ill-wishers, who had the ear of Louis to a certain degree: Richelieu, influenced chiefly by personal jealousies; the Duke d'Aiguillon, a nobleman of but little capacity and less character, who hoped to succeed to his authority, though his sole pretensions to ministerial office were founded on his reckoning the Cardinal Richelieu among his collateral ancestors, and his having formerly ceded his pretensions to the affections of Madame de Châteauroux in favour of the king; the younger Maupeou, who had recently succeeded his father as Chancellor, and who was a man well calculated to gain favour in such a court, since with very considerable talents he combined the most utter unscrupulousness, and a servility which would hesitate at no means of gratifying those to whom he owed or from whom he looked for preferment. To these was added a new financial minister, the Abbé Terray. Laverdy's tenure of office had been brief, though important and beneficial to the kingdom. He had been honestly diligent in his endeavours to improve the financial condition, and tried to put into practice the economical doctrines of Quesnay. The notorious embarrassments of the treasury, and the disgrace of minister after minister who

undertook the administration of that department, had prompted many thinking men to apply their minds to the task of devising some effectual remedy for those difficulties ; and among such, Quesnay, the king's physician, had promulgated a set of principles of finance which were adopted by a number of ingenious writers and speakers who had come to be known by the name of the Economists. His chief axiom was that the true source of national riches was to be found in agriculture ; and, relying on this as the basis of his system, he denounced all laws, regulations, and imposts which pressed on the landed interest, and particularly all taxes on the import or export of corn. His views were vigorously controverted, especially by M. Gournai, one of the chief officers of the department of commerce, who saw in labour and industry of every kind that foundation for prosperity which Quesnay confined to the land. Each had a number of disciples, though each in his enthusiasm for his own system predicted results from it sufficient, it might have been thought, to startle the most credulous. Each system was to make wars to cease in all the world, and with them all those vices which engender wars or which depress the lower classes equally with wars : there was to be no more idleness, nor oppression, nor poverty ; but every workman, whether farmer, as Quesnay would have it, or trader, according to Gournai, relieved from the interference of Government, would find the best and sufficient inducement to industry in the sense of that freedom, while industry as a matter of course would banish poverty.

Political economists in our own day, without expecting such golden results from the adoption of any theory, can see that both the theorists had struck out right principles, and that, in fact, their principles were

identical, the difference between them being only the question of to what material they should first be applied ; but at the time they were conceived to be antagonistic and incompatible, and Laverdy, a man of perfect integrity and of penetrating intellect, embraced the doctrines of Quesnay. He had hardly entered on office before he issued an edict establishing free trade in corn between the different provinces of the kingdom, following it soon afterwards by another which permitted the free export of all kinds of grain to any country whenever it did not exceed a certain fixed price. The measure acted, as it was natural that it should act, as a great stimulus to the farmer. Agricultural societies began to spring up in several districts ; enquiries were set on foot into the methods of cultivation practised in England and Holland, where the science of drawing riches from the land was supposed to be best understood ; waste lands were brought under the plough ; marshes were drained ; in some provinces stock farming was introduced on a large scale : an improved system of agriculture began to be diffused over the whole kingdom. What promised to be at least equally beneficial in the long run, and would have proved so had it not been for the subsequent revolution, was the change which these innovations produced on the character of the great landed proprietors. They had caught the contagion ; they began to interest themselves in the cultivation of their estates, and, as one of Quesnay's arguments had been founded on the improvement that his system would work in the condition of the labourer, to interest themselves also in the welfare of the peasantry. Instead of looking, as Louis XIV. had desired all his subjects to look, on Paris as the sole spot in the kingdom worth living in, the country

became fashionable, till, to quote the words of one of the best French writers, a man would have been ashamed not to be fond of it.*

But though the seeds of an increased prosperity were thus sown, it was evident that they must require time to produce visible fruit, and could produce no immediate relief to the revenue. Soon Laverdy, like his predecessors in office, succumbed to his difficulties. He was succeeded by Maynon d'Ynvan, a man of incorruptible personal honesty, but of no ability; who kept his office a little longer by the less creditable expedient of not seeking for any remedy, but letting things take their course. That course could only be for the worse. Again, as under previous ministers, each year the public debt was augmented, and as the interest of the new loans was added to the expenditure, each year the annual deficiency increased. M. d'Ynvan lost his credit, and in 1769 was succeeded by the Abbé Terray, who, like Laverdy, was one of the councillors of the Parliament; he resembled him also in being a man of great capacity, but differed from him in being utterly destitute of any description of virtue or scruples. His ecclesiastical profession did not deter him from boundless and shameless profligacy; in the pursuit of which, though hideously ugly, he was so aided by a ready wit, tinged with the sarcastic cynicism of the day, that, like his English contemporary Wilkes, whom he resembled in many points, he might have boasted that he was not more than half an hour behind the handsomest man in the country. He was equally corrupt in pecuniary matters, and had made a large fortune as the manager of a company which, after the passing of Laverdy's edicts, had bought up vast quantities of

* "On eût rougi de ne pas aimer les champs."—Lacretelle, iv.

corn, and, keeping it back till it had risen to a famine price, had then sold it at an enormous profit. So successful indeed as a speculation was the company, that Louis himself became a shareholder, and was not ashamed to derive a scandalous profit from the distress of his subjects. On matters of religion, and on the literary and philosophical questions which were so agitating the public mind, Terray seemed to have no opinions whatever. He had rejoiced over the fall of the Jesuits; he was equally bitter against the Jansenists. The Huguenots he regarded with mingled hatred and contempt; with hatred as opposers of the king's will, and with contempt as sticklers for trifles. Yet while thus believing nothing himself, he was too indifferent to the whole question of religion to be, like others, zealous in propagating disbelief. The disapproval with which Voltaire was regarded by the king, indisposed him to him; Rousseau was too eminently unpractical for him; and the Encyclopædists were too earnest and vehement. He was not even afraid to enter the lists with them, and to ridicule those who ridiculed every one else. By his wit, his irreligion, his impudence, and his skill in acquiring riches, he had won the notice of Madame de Pompadour; was regarded with similar favour by Madame du Barri; and he now aimed at binding her to him still more by aiding her machinations for the overthrow of her enemy.

His financial system was simply to enable the court to maintain its expenditure on an undiminished scale by oppressing and wronging every other class. He proclaimed that the national debt could not have risen to its existing amount without fraud on the part not only of the ministers who had contracted it, but of the fundholders who had lent the money; that therefore

the Government was the only proper judge of all such obligations, and of the extent to which they were to be discharged. And on these principles he required all holders of government bonds of any kind to bring them in for examination. There had been more than one precedent for such a measure in the time of the Regency, each instance of which being followed by an arbitrary reduction of the interest payable (without which, indeed, it would have been a purposeless waste of time), was, in fact, an act of bankruptcy. But on no occasion had the minister proceeded with a more absolute disdain of equity. No reason, except that of a resolution not to pay more, could be brought forward for any alteration in the terms on which the money had been raised; none whatever for a distinction between the different funds. Yet on some the interest was reduced a fourth or a fifth, on others the reduction amounted to half, while of the bills drawn on different departments, or assigned on special branches of the revenue, many were dishonoured altogether. The most extraordinary circumstance connected with this rearrangement of the debt was the slight opposition which it raised. The fashion of looking on the Government as a whole, and on its every separate act with contempt, had become so universal, that men ceased to consider even the loss of income as more than a subject of jesting when it arose from the conduct of the minister. Voltaire, who was a heavy loser, and fond of money, and who had also, in the cases of Lally and Calas, been vehement enough in his denunciations of the Parliament, now thought epigrams and lampoons sufficiently heavy artillery against the minister of finance, and there was a dash of good-humour in even the bitterest of the jests at his expense. A

tradesman named Billard became bankrupt under circumstances of the grossest dishonesty, and the next morning a notice was found on the gates of the abbé's house, that here was played the noble game of billiards. In one of the theatres the pit was on a certain occasion crowded to suffocation ; but the greatest sufferers from the pressure could laugh when a wag called out that they should send for the Abbé Terray to reduce them to half. However, though this apparent good-humour with which his measures were received lightened the task of the minister, they afforded no relief to the revenue commensurate with the disgrace they involved. Indeed, the equalization of the revenue with the expenditure was a task which Terray abandoned as hopeless ; even while augmenting the existing taxes ; imposing new ones with such facility of invention that he was known to issue as many as eleven financial edicts in a single day ; and contracting new loans, which, strange to say, the tricks he had played with the interest of the old debt had not rendered impossible. He rather preferred publishing the practical insolvency of the whole nation, and plainly setting before it the enormous amount now raised from the people, which in the course of the reign had risen from 120,000,000 to 300,000,075 livres ; and, in spite of this gigantic increase of income, the gradually increasing deficiency ; in order that by dwelling on such facts he might the more effectually discredit Choiseul as the principal member of the existing Government. The duke, however, was not responsible for embarrassments that had been nearly as extensive before he came into power ; and he was able to prove that in the expense of his own department he had made considerable reductions. But his fall was determined on. Madame du Barri was implacable in her

resentments.* She had become so inseparable from the king that she attended him even at the council, sitting on the arm of his chair, and playing all kinds of tricks to engross his attention; and privately she alarmed him with suggestions that the duke was likely to involve him in a renewal of war. Angry discussions respecting the Falkland Isles had for some time been going on between England and Spain, and Charles III. was quite prepared to vindicate his claims by force of arms, provided he could obtain the aid of France, of which Choiseul gave him hopes.† But Louis had too vivid a recollection of the events of the Seven Years' War to be willing to face a repetition of them; while Terray pronounced it impossible to find funds for a single campaign, and joined the mistress in representing Choiseul's continuance in office as the sole circumstance that could endanger the permanence of peace. Accordingly, at Christmas, 1760, Louis sent him a peremptory warrant commanding him to resign his ministerial offices: of the government of Touraine he could not deprive him without an impeachment; but he also commanded him to desist from exercising any authority in the province, and banished him to his estate. And when the duke requested permission to remain in Paris a day or two to wind up his affairs, he sent him a second peremptory order to quit the city in twenty-four hours. His cousin, the Duke de Praslin, received a similar sen-

* Madame de Staël, probably as well-informed as any one of the secret history of this period, attributes his disgrace solely to the mistress:—"M. de Choiseul, exilé parcequ'il avait résisté au méprisable ascendant de l'une des maîtresses du roi."—"Considérations sur la Révolution Française," i. 44.

† On the influence of France in the affair of the Falkland Islands, see Lord Malmesbury's "Despatches," vol. i. p. 58-76.

tence of deprivation of his office, and exile. Nor was even his sister, the Duchess de Grammont, protected by her sex; she too was banished. D'Aiguillon succeeded Choiseul as foreign secretary, and the Marquis de Montagnard in the department of war; while Terray received the reward of his enmity to him in the portfolio of the marine, which had been taken from De Praslin.

Choiseul had never been so popular in the height of his power as he was now rendered by his fall. D'Aiguillon, who chiefly profited by it, was almost as generally despised as the mistress who had effected it. During the few hours that Choiseul was permitted to remain in Paris, his hôtel was thronged by princes and dukes, councillors of the Parliament, and men of letters, expressing, without restraint or qualification, their respect and sympathy. The next morning, when he departed, a vast string of carriages attended him to the gates of the city. For the first time Versailles was deserted, that its usual frequenters might pay their court to the fallen minister; and the feeling was strengthened when, a few weeks afterwards, another measure was adopted, to which it was then perceived that Choiseul's disgrace had been a stepping-stone. The duke had latterly confined himself mainly to the duties of his own department; leaving the affairs of the interior chiefly to the management of the Chancellor Maupéou, who, knowing the suspicion with which Louis regarded the Parisian Parliament, had conceived a plan for abolishing those bodies altogether throughout the kingdom. It was a singularly roundabout method by which he proceeded to his object, and one which showed a noble who eventually became one of his chief colleagues, in no very favorable light; but it succeeded; and if it damaged the character of his

friend, perhaps that result also was not one which he greatly regretted.

It has been mentioned that, on the occasion of the repulse of the British force which had landed at St. Cast in 1758, the Duke d'Aiguillon, then and still Governor of Brittany, had kept at a discreet distance from the scene of action, which he was contented to survey from a windmill. The Bretons, a race eminently distinguished for bravery and enterprise, were not sparing of their comments on his conduct. He vowed revenge, and thought the best mode of wreaking it was to thwart and humble the Breton Parliament, whose seat was at Rennes. But his means of annoyance did not equal those of retaliation possessed by the Parliament. That body was under the guidance of its attorney-general, La Chalotais, a man of not only unimpeachable integrity, but unequalled for knowledge of both provincial law and also the constitution of the whole kingdom: led by him the councillors began to charge the duke with malversation. He endeavoured to set up the States of the province against them, since that body was already at issue with the Parliament on the subject of the Jesuits, who were not yet expelled from Brittany and whom the States were inclined to protect. But when the Parliament proceeded to refuse registration to the governor's financial edicts, the States, who equally objected to them, were, through the influence of La Chalotais, reconciled to it, and from that time forward co-operated with it in perfect harmony. United they carried on the attack against the duke with great vigour, endeavouring to procure his removal from the government. But one of the secretaries of state, the Duke de la Vrillière, was his uncle. With his aid D'Aiguillon for a time turned the tables on his opponents; and

caused La Chalotais to be arrested on a charge of having written anonymous letters, couched in seditious terms, to the king himself. The charge was supported by, or rather was founded on the evidence of M. Calonne, a man fast rising to distinction, who had fancied the letters to be in the handwriting of La Chalotais. There is no doubt that he was mistaken; indeed, it was afterwards stated, though not proved, that they were the work of D'Aiguillon himself. The case ought to have been tried by the Parliament at Rennes; but Louis sent a commission to St. Malo to investigate the matter, who, it was generally believed, were instructed to condemn the prisoner. However, if such were the instructions of the commissioners, the discontent was so loudly pronounced that no one dared carry them out. Louis himself cancelled the commission; and was contented to banish La Chalotais without having anything proved against him.

The Bretons at once retaliated the injustice done to their champion by impeaching D'Aiguillon of tyranny, peculation, and a deliberate and sustained attempt to corrupt the fountain of justice by bribing judges and intimidating witnesses; and now Maupeou's schemes began to approach their completion. At his suggestion the king removed the hearing of the case to the tribunal of the Paris Parliament as the only court in which a peer of France could be tried, and attended its first sittings in person. While he was present, the Parliament treated him and his decisions with uniform deference. But when after a time he wearied of the protracted proceedings, the councillors, relieved from their awe, began to show less favour to the duke, and to assert the rights of the injured province with greater freedom. There were

those who believed that Louis had still been acting under his Chancellor's advice, and had withdrawn from the latter sittings of the court in order to find a pretext for quarrelling with the Parliament, which he saw it would not afford him so long as he presided. He now, professing displeasure at some of their recent decisions, revoked the patent by which he had remitted the affair to their decision, and prohibited them from continuing the investigation. They denied his power thus to interrupt a cause in the middle of trial; and, resolving by a formal act to prove his inability to arrest their proceedings, they passed a vote, as the whole cause was not yet ripe for adjudication, that "facts had been established against the Duke d'Aiguillon which stained his honour, and they prohibited him from exercising any of the rights of the peerage till by a formal decision of a competent court he should be exculpated of the charges brought against him." To make the affair a personal quarrel between Louis and his Parliament, Maupeou persuaded the king to repair to the palace of the Parliament and tear the vote from its records. But so undignified a step only showed more strongly the weakness into which the royal authority had fallen. For not only all the peers of the highest reputation, but all the princes of the blood royal, without exception, took part with the Parliament. Louis, who was now but a puppet in Maupeou's hands, summoned the Parliament to a Bed of Justice at Versailles. They replied by protesting against Beds of Justice altogether, as incompatible with the exercise of that free deliberation which was their right; but they were too fully established by precedents for them to refuse attendance: and on their appearance at the palace he reproached them in bitter terms for their

obstinacy ; and the Chancellor read an edict forbidding the maintenance of many of their customs which they looked upon as privileges, and their exercise of which had never been questioned before. The rebuke had a very different effect from that which it had been intended to produce. The councillors were not so much terrified at the king's severity as they were indignant at seeing D'Aiguillon, after they had formally pronounced his dishonour, still sitting among the peers by the side of their sovereign. They asserted that they, the chief judges of the nation, were treated as criminals ; and unanimously declaring that they were not left in sufficient freedom and independence to perform their judicial functions, suspended all exercise of them.

Maupeou had now brought matters to the point which he desired. He had been planning the creation of a new tribunal, and all that he required was to drive Choiseul from the king's councils, that the Parliament might have no support in his energy and fertility of resource. How the minister was deprived of his authority we have already mentioned ; and immediately afterwards Maupeou proceeded to execute his plans. A royal letter was despatched to the Parliament, commanding the members to resume their judicial functions. They refused to comply, unless the recent censure of their proceedings and the edict abridging their ancient privileges were cancelled. They could never, they said, return to a degraded seat. The Chancellor felt or affected the highest indignation. He had yet one more insult in store for them. It might be supposed possible that, as separate individuals, the councillors would show less resolution than in a collected body ; and on the night of the 19th of January two troopers were sent to the house of each

member, who roused them from their beds to present them a peremptory order from the king to resume their sittings, and to require a written and instant reply, limited to yes or no. They were not allowed to quit the house to consult their friends; nor to expand their answer by any further statement or argument. Yet nearly all stood firm. A few, not one-twelfth of the whole body, were moved by the tears of their wives and families, who dreaded to see them carried off to prison or driven from their homes into banishment, perhaps too by their own timidity, and signed their consent. All the rest refused: and even those who had consented repented of their weakness, when the next day they repaired to their palace to take their seats, and saw the scantiness of their numbers. Nor had their compliance with the royal mandate saved even themselves. The Chancellor now pronounced the whole body contumacious; and the next night the members were once more awakened by sterner messengers. Warrants were served on each individual, depriving him of his office, and banishing him from the capital. The dissolution of the provincial parliaments followed as a matter of course the extinction of their more powerful sister in Paris: and with this scanty ceremony, by the most contemptible king who had sat on the French throne, was abolished a body which for nearly five hundred years had been second only to the sovereign in dignity and reputation; which had been constantly regarded by the people as the embodiment of law and justice, and sometimes, with less reason, as the champion of their liberties.

It may seem strange that it should thus have suffered itself to be overthrown without an attempt to resist or avert the blow; that it should have accepted its annihilation without a single endeavour to raise

the people, or even the citizens of the capital, whom in the preceding reign it had found such enthusiastic supporters, in its cause. But it is perhaps stranger still that its fall was regarded with almost absolute indifference by the mass of the people. It may even be said that, except in the case of the comparatively small number whose emoluments, direct or indirect, were affected by the measure, it was regarded with approbation; since Maupeou promised to replace the Parliament by a tribunal which should be both more prompt and less costly in its dispensation of justice; and, indeed, there was in the whole kingdom no reform which was more greatly needed, for the nominal jurisdiction of each Parliament was so extensive as to be almost a nullity in the more remote districts. That of Paris reached to Artois and Champagne in the north and east, and to Auvergne in the south; and it was obvious that to the inhabitants of the remoter districts redress of even the greatest wrongs must have been dilatory and costly, and that for all but the greatest there could be no real relief whatever. Moreover, the cases of Lally, Calas, and others, still fresh in the minds of the people, made it obvious that justice, and even a due regard to the forms of law, had not always the slightest share in influencing their decisions: and besides these considerations, which had reference solely to the administration of the law, others of almost equal gravity were not wanting to reconcile men of statesmanlike minds, if any such were at that time to be found in France, to the blow thus dealt. Ever since the beginning of the reign the Parliament had been engaged in a constant struggle against the crown, in order to establish that right to a degree of legislative power for which in former days they had ventured on open rebellion; which Louis XIV., in the

plenitude of his power, had forbidden them again to assert ; but which the Regent's thoughtless indulgence had seemed to open a door to their reviving : and in their recent conduct many might discern the seeds of civil war, while more far-sighted and deeper thinkers might judge that if, as the weakness of the Government rendered not improbable, they should succeed in their object, such an union as would then be established of legislative and judicial powers, and eventually of administrative authority also, in the same body, would be more incompatible with real freedom than any amount of misgovernment.

Maupeou hastened to fulfil his promise of a new tribunal. Three days after the banishment of the councillors, and even before the edict formally abolishing the Parliament was issued, a commission of the Grand Council was appointed to perform its judicial functions ; and at the beginning of February six new sovereign courts were established at Arras, Blois, Chalons-sur-Marne, Clermont, Lyons, and Poitiers ; and the same edict abolished all fees to the judges or other officials, limiting their emoluments to their stipends, and thus rendering justice absolutely gratuitous to the meanest peasant. In the spring a further blow was struck at any hopes which the councillors might entertain that any of these measures would be modified or reconsidered. The princes of the blood royal, almost without exception, the Duke d'Orleans, his son, the Duke de Chartres, Condé, Conti, and others, had drawn up a protest against the abolition of the Parliament and the banishment of the members, which had been likewise signed by a large proportion of the peers. A fresh series of edicts was issued, banishing those princes, bestowing on the new tribunals the title of Parliament, and declaring the judges

irremoveable. A Bed of Justice was held for their promulgation, and the king after their announcement commanded obedience to them in as lordly a tone as had ever been assumed by Louis XIV., prohibiting all deliberation on the subject and any remonstrance in favour of the old Parliament, which would be useless, since he would never change his mind. The new judges were the only persons who placed much trust in this assurance. A more common opinion was that the Chancellor had put such imperious expressions in his master's mouth chiefly as a security to himself, to prevent him from receding, and that they rather betrayed his distrust of than his confidence in his master's firmness. Those of his nobles who had known Louis longest shared this feeling. Madame du Barri did not; but, meeting the Duke de Nivernois, who had not concealed his agreement with the protest of the banished princes, she accosted him with a smile of triumph: "Well, my lord duke, you will surely give up your opposition now? You have heard the king declare that he will never change his mind." "Yes, madame," replied the old noble with bantering civility, "but he was looking at you." As usual, the lady was the more correct in her anticipations; at first the measure was generally unpopular, but, as no practical inconvenience to any class ensued from its operation, it gradually came to be acquiesced in, and during the remainder of the reign no serious effort was made to procure its reversal.

For the remainder of the king's life Maupeou may be looked on as the chief minister; and for France there were hardly three more uneventful years in her history. In the most important department, that of finance, where not to improve, or at all events not to remedy abuses, is to get worse, there was no amend-

ment. Terray had considerable abilities of a certain kind, but they were displayed rather in a methodical way of keeping the accounts, which showed at a glance how great the embarrassments of the revenue were, than in diminishing those embarrassments. He added greatly to the existing imposts of all kinds, and renewed several that had been discarded, such as that on the exportation of corn, on which he replaced a tax which effectually abolished the free trade which had hitherto produced such good effects. No minister had ever been so prolific of or so unscrupulous in his expedients; but in spite of them all the deficiency increased, and was enhanced by the deterioration of the public credit which was the consequence of his compulsory reduction of the interest payable on the debt, and which was so great that for a loan which he endeavoured to raise in Holland he could procure no contractors.

The most remarkable event of the three years, as far as France was concerned, was one which in one respect was a reversal of Choiseul's policy, and in another a consummation of it. Clement XIII. had died a year or two before, it was said chiefly of vexation at the degree to which he had been forced to acquiesce in the severities exercised by the different Catholic sovereigns upon the Jesuits; and as his successor Ganganelli, who took the title of Clement XIV. and had originally been a member of the order of St. Francis, was understood to be less favorable to them, Choiseul had pressed him immediately after his accession to abolish the order altogether. He refused instant compliance, on the plausible plea that so grave a matter required deliberation, though so evasive an answer showed an inclination to consent; but now, finding that he had to deal with a minister of less

capacity and resolution than Choiseul, he thought he might make a market of his compliance, and as the price of it exacted the restitution of the Venaissin and Avignon. Louis was rather glad to restore them ; for, profligate as he was, he had twinges of superstition, and they had recently given him some uneasiness lest he should be guilty of sacrilege if he retained possessions belonging of right to the Holy See.

The cession of this province, important as it was, may, therefore, perhaps not deserve to be considered a grave fault of policy in D'Aiguillon ; but in every quarter he displayed the greatest want of sagacity or vigilance, or both. In spite of his engagements to the Turks, now engaged in that war against Russia which first developed the talents of Suvarof, he neglected to support them in the resistance which he himself had mainly encouraged. By similar supineness he contributed to the ruin of the Polish confederates in their struggle against Russia ; first sending Dumouriez to their assistance, then allowing him to be overpowered for lack of reinforcements or supplies, and, when he had returned to France, suffering his successor in the command, the Baron de Vioménil, to be blockaded with his division in Cracow, and starved into surrender. His want of vigilance and energy was displayed still more mischievously to Europe, and still more fatally to his own reputation, in the case of the atrocious partition of Poland, which grew out of these last-mentioned transactions ; when Austria and Russia fell in with the unprincipled proposals of the ever-restless and ever-covetous Frederic, and by main force seized on and divided among themselves the greater part of the republican kingdom, without a single objection proceeding from the Court of France ; without her foreign secretary even suspecting what was in

contemplation till it was executed. Louis himself, blunted as was his sense of either equity or honour, felt both the wickedness of the act and the disgrace which it was to him to seem to have connived at it ; and on first hearing what had been done, exclaimed that it could not have happened if Choiseul had remained in power. But he took no steps to rid himself of ministers whom this exclamation showed that he evidently saw through and despised ; and they continued, if not to enjoy his confidence, at least to direct his councils.

Meanwhile Louis suddenly found his strength beginning to decay. A long course of debauchery had worn him out ; and the deaths of one or two of his most favoured courtiers, which took place towards the end of 1773, shook his nerves. Still the strength of his constitution, which must have been great to support him through so long a series of excesses of every kind, would probably have enabled him long to battle with decay, had he not, in April, 1774, caught the small-pox, which was raging with great virulence in Paris and its neighbourhood. It was a striking retribution if, as was generally believed, he had caught it from a young girl whom the week before he had half bribed, half terrified, into submission to his desires. The moment that he understood the character of the disease which had attacked him, he gave himself up for lost. But his ministers, who dreaded above all things the accession of so virtuous a prince and so high-spirited a princess as the dauphin and dauphiness, refused to believe in his danger ; the courtiers, fearful of irretrievably offending Madame du Barri if he should recover, and of being too late in deserting her if he should not, were sadly perplexed ; and the priests, with Archbishop Beaumont at their

head, were in similar difficulty on other grounds. They thought it would be a scandal if he should die without receiving the sacraments: the precedent was clear that before they were administered the mistress must be removed; and she, hoping for the best, sent the Archbishop a message by her worthy envoy, Richelieu, that a cardinal's hat, of which he had long been ambitious, should be his reward for leaving her undisturbed. Meanwhile but few of any class or rank were allowed access to the sick chamber, partly for the sake of the invalid, and partly that they might not catch or spread the infection. The Duke d'Orleans and one or two others of the princes who had had the complaint visited the king occasionally, and his three daughters, the Princesses Adelaide, Victoire, and Sophie, though they had not had it, thought themselves bound to tend him as his nurses, and performed their filial duty with an unremitting affection which was nearly fatal to themselves, since they all caught the disease. At last the king grew so evidently worse that D'Orleans and Madame Adelaide consulted the physicians on the subject of the sacraments. They had for some days been of opinion that that precaution should not be delayed; and with Louis's consent the Duke d'Aiguillon carried off Madame du Barri to his own country-house. She was promised an immediate recall if he got better; but he himself looked on her removal as a sentence of immediate death. The king's confessor, the Abbé Maudoux, had still some little scruple, since Ruelle, to which the lady had retired, was but two leagues from Versailles, and he would have preferred her withdrawing at least as far as Paris. But he was overruled by his colleagues; a declaration was drawn up, to be published in the king's name, that "Though he owed no

account of his conduct to any but God alone, he nevertheless declared that he repented having given rise to scandal among his subjects, and only desired to live for the support of religion and the welfare of his people." Even this avowal the Cardinal de Roche-Aymer, who administered the sacrament, promised Madame du Barri to suppress; but the abbé was firm on this point, and compelled its publication, in spite of Richelieu, who insulted the cardinal with the grossest abuse for his breach of promise.* It may be doubted whether such a compromise with profligacy and profanation of the sacraments of the Church by its heads was not the greatest scandal of all; but it was only in too complete harmony with their conduct throughout the whole of the reign. And, as it was impossible but that religion itself should suffer in the estimation of worldly men from such an open disregard of all but its merest forms, it cannot be denied that the French cardinals and prelates about the court are almost as fully responsible for the formal disavowal of all religion which was witnessed within twenty years, as the scoffers who now wrote against it, or the professed infidels who then renounced it. After a day or two, however, all prospect of the king's recovery vanished; mortification set in, and on the 10th of May he died.

There is no need to occupy ourselves in discussing, further than the transactions of his reign have displayed it, the character of one of the most infamous monarchs that has ever sat upon a throne: one who had every vice but cruelty, and who carried them all to excess. But though it does not belong to the historian to invade the province of the preacher, it is

* Besenval, i. 304.

hardly possible to avoid remarking that, while the lives of all bad men, whether kings or subjects, are warnings to their fellow-mortals, that of Louis XV. is particularly such, since his original fault appears to have been weakness rather than wickedness, and since his unparalleled profligacy is to be traced in the first instance rather to submission to the designing treachery of Richelieu than to any innate appetite for vice. Originally Louis was not devoid of a kind of passive goodness, of such, at least, as consists in a feeling of respect for virtue or holiness in others; of a desire to earn praise and goodwill; and of that kind of moderate humanity that pities if it does not relieve suffering. Nor was he altogether destitute of natural ability, having, as we have seen, acuteness sufficient to foresee both the evils with which his successor was threatened, and even to discern which class of his subjects would prove the most dangerous to his authority. But both good nature and good sense were overgrown and neutralized by an incurable indolence; and from indolence proceeded that fatal facility which led him, at the bidding of the most worthless of his courtiers, to violate all his public and private duties; to stamp his own name with ineffaceable reproach; and to bequeath to his successor a heritage of trouble and misery which neither the honesty and abilities of his ministers, nor his own unaffected piety and sincere patriotism could avert or mitigate.

CHAPTER XXXI.

It has been an ungrateful and humiliating task to describe the last reign, the most wretched exhibition of weakness and depravity which disgraces the annals of modern Europe. It will be a still more painful employment to relate the history of that which we are now approaching; to recount the overthrow of the most ancient dynasty of Christendom, and with it that of all established authority; the strange prostration at the mercy of a band of infidel ruffians, who were not only murderers but cowards, of a high-spirited, gallant, and accomplished nation, which became at once the accomplice and the victim of atrocities such as no country or age had ever suffered or witnessed; the legalized slaughter of a virtuous king and his innocent family; the formal disavowal of God himself, the very ministers and heads of the Church setting the example of the impious repudiation.

It might have been thought that Louis XVI. was mounting the throne under peculiarly favorable circumstances, since he could not fail to be contrasted with the last sovereign; and not only was it impossible for any one to be so worthless as not to shine by such a juxtaposition, but in those moral excellences which, in peaceful and ordinary times shed a lustre on a crown, he might have challenged a comparison with the worthiest of his predecessors. With the

passive virtues of piety, humanity, justice, patience, and fortitude, combined with a sincere love for his people, he was amply endowed. It must be confessed, on the other hand, that of intellectual ability, and of those more active qualities which, though perhaps hardly attributes of the intellect, are nevertheless indispensable to a statesman and ruler of a nation, he was nearly destitute. He had no decision, no energy, no steadiness of purpose, no force of character. Though honestly anxious to select the best ministers, he often allowed his judgment to be overruled; and, with respect to those to whom he did entrust his affairs, when they were perplexed he had not discernment to assist or to prompt them, when they saw their way he had not vigour of mind to support them. Unhappily his lot was cast at a time when the vices of his predecessor and the inveterate errors of the Government had made talents as well as virtues requisite to encounter the difficulties and dangers with which the State was surrounded. The finances were in a state of inextricable disorder and hopeless embarrassment. The destitution of the lower classes, and in the agricultural districts of all but the very highest, was universal and insupportable. The discontent was, as a matter of course, at least co-extensive with the distress; and even of those who were not exasperated by personal privations, three most influential classes were as bitter against the Government as those who were. The lawyers were indignant at the suppression of the Parliaments; the clergy resented the expulsion of the Jesuits; while the literary men were hostile to all institutions which, by their mere existence, seemed to stand in the way of their theories, whether political or religious.

During the last reign no attempt whatever had

been made to remove or check these evils, notorious as they were, nor to extinguish their causes. But some endeavour to remedy them could no longer be delayed; and in some degree the very virtues of the new king were even pernicious, since his meekness and patience seemed almost to invite attacks on his own authority. Nor was it wholly without influence on the course of events and on his subsequent fate that he had neither the appearance nor the demeanour of a king. Not only was his figure heavy and ungraceful, his gait slouching, his voice thin and squeaking; but in those matters also which depended on himself he was slovenly and undignified. His clothes were ill put on, his hair was usually disordered.* He was not even always clean. One of his favourite amusements was working at a blacksmith's forge; and he constantly presented himself, even in the queen's apartments among her and her ladies, reeking with perspiration and begrimed with soot like an ordinary mechanic. In his manners he was reserved, even shy, and incurably taciturn.† And matters such as these, never unimportant at courts, had especial influence in the eyes of a people so addicted to show and pomp as the French. In a happier age his deficiencies of every kind might have been less remarked; his virtues might have made a greater impression; he might have earned the blessings of his subjects and the grateful recollection of posterity as a good king. It was his misfortune that he was

* Madame de Campan, c. v.

† Ibid. c. xvi., where the authoress relates that the queen, having caused two of the guards who had been severely wounded when the mob attacked the palace to be presented to the king and to herself, that she might thank them, addressed them herself with grace and warmth. But that the king (though "son émotion pourtant était visible, et des larmes d'attendrissement remplissaient ses yeux,") could not be brought to say a single word to them.

called to power when scarcely anything could save his country but a great king, and of greatness he had no element in his composition.

His very first step was both faulty and mischievous, and also revealed another difficulty in his path to which we have not yet alluded. The queen in many respects presented a strong contrast to her husband. In person she was handsome and stately; in her manners a princely dignity was happily combined with an innocent simplicity of taste and condescending kindness to all who approached her. Her apprehension was quick; her character fearless, energetic, and resolute. Yet even her higher qualities were not without some drawbacks which had a prejudicial influence on her husband's fortunes. She had been but scantily educated, and the education which she had received, flowing perhaps more from her mother's example than from her direct precepts, had imbued her with a desire both to exercise and display a leading influence in the political affairs of the kingdom.* She lost no time. Louis had hardly received the congratulations of the courtiers on his accession when she began to make essay of her power. She persuaded him to discard the existing ministry, which certainly had no claim to be retained in his service, hoping to procure the reinstatement of Choiseul as a personal friend of her own and a partisan of the Austrian

* It may be remarked that her eldest brother, the Emperor Joseph, to whom she freely communicated her views, actions, and objects, warned her very plainly against the indulgence of this desire; as not only because her previous education, and her ordinary habits and pursuits, had in no degree qualified her to meddle in politics, but also because her interference in such matters, and in the strife between parties and candidates for office, would gradually deprive her of the goodwill and esteem of the nation, and sooner or later bring on her great annoyances, even if it did not mar the happiness of her life.—See Letters in M. Arneth's collection, entitled "*Marie Antoinette, Joseph II., &c.*," June, 1775.

interest. In this object she met with an obstacle on which she had not reckoned; since Louis had never forgotten the suspicions he had been unjustly taught to entertain of the duke as the murderer of his father; and she was forced to yield to this prejudice, and to the influence of the king's three aunts, who, having each a different favourite, insisted that his choice could only lie between De Bernis, Machault, and Maurepas. No man of ordinary discernment could be long in doubt which to prefer. Machault had shown himself a minister of both ability and integrity; De Bernis, though not without capacity, had but little credit for honesty; Maurepas had none for either, and was moreover superannuated. It was said, too, that the elder dauphin, the king's father, had, on his death bed, recommended Machault to his confidence as his most trustworthy councillor. And Louis had written and despatched a letter to that statesman, summoning him to take his place at the head of the new ministry, when the Princess Adelaide, the patroness of Maurepas, obtaining access to her nephew, overruled his wise decision in favour of the antiquated courtier who had entered on official life as far back as the reign of Louis XIV. The courier was recalled, the letter was re-directed, and M. Maurepas became prime minister. And, as the circumstance of any change in the ministry at all being made so promptly was notoriously owing to the queen's interference, the odium of so unwise a choice of the minister fell upon her likewise, though in that particular she had been thwarted and overborne.

In another matter also, which, however, was strictly within her legitimate province, she was somewhat injudicious. The etiquette of the French court was of the strictest and most irksome character. Devised

by the theatrical taste of Louis XIV., it had been maintained without relaxation by the late king, alike in his most dissolute as in his most familiar moments. Madame de Campan* has left us a ridiculous picture of the additions to their ordinary costume which even his own daughters were compelled to make before appearing in his presence; arraying themselves, sometimes at a moment's notice, in a huge hooped petticoat, stiff with golden embroidery, fastening on a long train, and hiding whatever parts of their dress might be out of keeping with these stately appendages, beneath an ample mantle. Nor when thus equipped could they present themselves unattended before majesty, but chamberlains were put in requisition to bear lights before them, pages to support their trains, while ladies in waiting, maids of honour, and equerries made up the retinue which was necessary to their being permitted to receive a brief salutation and a kiss on the forehead from their royal father, after which they made an equally imposing march back again to their own apartments, to disencumber themselves of their finery. Against this formal ceremoniousness the young queen, she was not yet nineteen years of age, revolted. No pomp or forms of ostentatious grandeur had been allowed to chill the intercourse of her daughters with Maria Teresa. The Austrian royal family had roamed free, unrestrained, and in simple attire about the palace and gardens of Schönbrunn; and Marie Antoinette, who while only dauphiness had submitted with undisguised impatience to the pompous observances of French court life, as soon as she became queen was eager to resume her muslin gown and straw bonnet, and with them the

* Madame de Campan, c. iv.

indulgence of the simple innocent pleasures of her earlier youth and her Austrian home. She had already given her principal lady in waiting, the Countess de Noailles, to whom the precise observance of every regulation of the days of Louis XIV. was the very breath of life, the nickname of Madame Etiquette ; and now that she could look upon herself as entirely her own mistress, she treated all the countess's remonstrances with utter disregard, and introduced at Versailles the unceremonious fashions which, though akin to the manly habits of Henry IV., had never been seen in that artificial atmosphere. However natural such conduct may have been in one who was still but a young girl, it was an error in judgment. A certain degree of ceremony and etiquette is necessary at every court, as a recognised check upon presumption and impropriety. The Parisians in general had long been accustomed to identify them with the very essence of royalty ; while the courtiers felt themselves deprived by their abolition of no small part of their own consequence. The heart-burnings thus engendered were exasperated by a feeling of national vanity, which could not brook to see French costumes superseded by those of any other country. To a large portion of the people the alliance with Austria was still unpalatable as a departure from the old principles of policy adopted by Henry and Richelieu, and in retaliation for her own jests, the queen was nicknamed the Austrian ; and, the name itself reciprocally breeding a belief, than which none was ever more false, that she preserved an attachment to the interests of her native over those of her adopted country, there came a day when it had no small share in producing the bitterest calamities to herself and all connected with her.

With the exception of Maurepas the new ministry was not ill chosen. The Count de Vergeunes, who became secretary for foreign affairs, had acquired a considerable knowledge of them in more than one diplomatic employment. The Count de Mury, the minister of war, was a veteran of unblemished character. M. de Miromesnil, who was entrusted with the seals, though too frivolous in his tastes to have earned the reputation of a sound lawyer, was at least more upright and far more popular than Maupeou; and the unprecedentedly high renown for both capacity and integrity which the new minister of finance, M. Turgot, had earned as intendant in the provinces, warranted an expectation that tricks and temporary expedients like those of Terray would be no longer had recourse to; but that large-minded practical wisdom would remedy acknowledged evils by putting things on the solid foundation of a new system and just principles. Turgot had been originally intended for the priesthood; and had gained considerable reputation as a student at the Sorbonne, when he relinquished theological studies for a more active life. After filling one or two inferior appointments with credit, he was removed to Limoges as intendant of the Limousin. Through the supineness of the nobles, who were the nominal governors, the intendants had gradually come to be looked on as the supreme authorities in their respective provinces, whose welfare consequently depended almost wholly on their conscientiousness, ability, and energy.* It was too

* The intendant of each province was, in fact, its absolute governor: "Toute l'administration de la généralité était livrée à un seul homme, l'intendant; lequel agissait, non seulement sans contrôle, mais sans conseil."—De Tocqueville, "L'Ancien Régime," p. 286.

often the case that they imitated the evil example of their superiors, and regarded their office only as a means of enriching themselves. But Turgot was an intendant of a different stamp. He took a high view of his duties; was resolved to perform them strictly, and brought to his task not only honesty of purpose, but an independent judgment; a keen appreciation not only of abuses but of their originating causes; and a fertility of administrative talent, combined with a fearless determination which enabled him to grapple with and overcome them. In other parts of the kingdom as the last reign drew to its close the burdens and distresses of the people were growing with a steadily increasing weight. In Limoges, under the happy management of Turgot, they were year by year alleviated. He abolished the *corvée*, the cruel and impolitic regulation which imposed upon the peasantry the gratuitous labour of the repair of the roads, and of the transport of the baggage of the king's troops, substituting for it a light money tax, which was imposed equally on all classes. He removed the heaviest imposts of the *octroi*, especially those which restricted the transport of corn. He even showed his sense of the necessities of the working classes still more boldly, issuing and compelling obedience to an order which enjoined the rich proprietors to support their poor dependents during the winter season.* And while the inhabitants of the province in general, and more especially the poor, blessed him for the improvement of their condition, such was the

* See "Ancien Régime," p. 196. De Tocqueville, who praises the edict, even while characterizing it as illegal, says that the clergy of many provinces had suggested and implored the issue of such a command during the last years of the preceding reign.

ascendancy of his character that the ministers in Paris and the Council of State sanctioned his measures, great as was the reproach which his well-directed energy in reality threw upon their inactivity. He remained at Limoges, steadily persevering in his career of unchecked improvement till the death of the king, when Maurepas, who was aware of his popularity both in his own province and in other districts which had heard of his achievements there, and who felt that something was wanting to make his own appointment acceptable to the nation, recommended him to the new sovereign, placing him at first at the head of the marine, from which after a week or two he was removed to become controller-general of the finances.

Though the whole constitution of the State needed reform, it was obvious that the department of the finances was that which could least brook delay ; and that the bringing of them into a healthy state was the necessary preliminary to every other improvement. Turgot was pre-eminently the man for so difficult and important a task, since, independently of his general talent for organization and administration, he had paid particular attention to financial subjects ; and, in a series of articles in the *Encyclopædia*, he had shown a thorough appreciation of the doctrines of the Economists, of the rival theories of Quesnay and De Gournai, and of the claims of both agriculture and commerce on the attention of statesmen who would raise any country to prosperity. He had, moreover, demonstrated that any reform in the financial system of the Government to be permanently efficient must be accompanied by a removal of abuses in other departments, and in the general constitution of the land ; and of these evils, too, the greater part fell within his

province, since the controller of finance had an admitted right to regulate many things which apparently belonged rather to the Minister of the Interior. To both financial and political reforms, accordingly, Turgot applied himself with characteristic zeal; taking those which related to the revenue first, and developing his views on that subject in a letter addressed to the king himself, which he stated to be but a sketch suggested to him by a rapid glance at the position of the nation, and susceptible of modifications when he should have time for a more careful examination. It had, however, been in fact inspired by such a thorough knowledge of the subject, and such a deep appreciation of the only sound principles of finance, that his subsequent investigations dictated no alteration in his first plan. It was simple: enormous as the debt was, and heavy as hitherto was the annual deficiency, he resolved that there should be no act of bankruptcy, which some had recommended, but which he looked on as equally subversive both of good faith and public credit, whether it was effected by a compulsory reduction of interest, or by downright repudiation. There should be no augmentation of taxes, the distress of the people forbade it; and he was convinced that the kind heart of the king himself would shrink from it. There should be no fresh loans; for they must inevitably hereafter involve one of the measures which he had just rejected; bankruptcy to get rid of the obligation, or fresh taxes to meet it. He hoped to establish a proper balance between the income and the expenditure of the country by other means. By placing the taxation on a better and more equal footing; by a great reduction of expenditure in every department; and by an improved development of the resources of the whole kingdom through the encou-

agement of every kind of industry. He did not conceal from himself the difficulty of the task which he had undertaken; he was aware that he should be provoking the enmity of all who had hitherto profited by the abuses which he hoped to extirpate. He knew that they would certainly be diligent, and perhaps not unsuccessful, in setting against him the very people who suffered by those abuses, but who were at all times easily misled. He apprehended that even the kindness of heart of Louis himself, and his attachment to his friends, might disincline him to see them deprived of emoluments, however indefensible in their source or their character, which they had been in the habit of enjoying; and from such feelings he could only appeal to the king's confidence in his integrity and public spirit, which had led his majesty to confer his present office on him; and on the king's own justice and probity, of which the one must determine him to maintain the honesty of the State, the other to uphold his servant in the only means by which that honesty could be permanently preserved.*

The king and the minister set a noble example of the intended alleviation of the people's burdens at their own expense. It had been customary at the accession of a new sovereign to offer him a large present

* "J'ai peur que je serai seul à combattre contre les abus de tous genres; contre les efforts de ceux qui gagnent à ces abus j'aurai à lutter même contre la bonté naturelle, contre la générosité de votre majesté Ce peuple auquel je me sacrifie est si aisé à tromper que peut-être j'encourrai sa haine par les mesures mêmes que je prendrai pour le défendre contre la vexation. Je serai calomnié Votre majesté se souviendra que c'est sur la foi de ses promesses que je me charge d'un fardeau peut-être au-dessus de mes forces; que c'est à elle personnellement, à l'homme honnête, à l'homme juste et bon plutôt qu'au roi que je m'abandonne." These are a few sentences of Turgot's letter. The greater part of it is quoted by Lacretelle, iv. 351-4.

of money in honour of the event.* It was equally usual for a new controller-general to receive from the farmers of the revenue a sum of several hundred thousand livres as a handsel of office. Louis remitted the offering due to him altogether, and Turgot applied his entirely to the relief of those poor people who seemed at the moment to be the greatest sufferers from the existing distress. The example of disinterestedness in such quarters was greatly needed, for among the drains on the treasury which were the most unreasonable, and which, on every account, it was most desirable to retrench, were those which were caused by the prodigal expenditure of the other members of the royal family, and especially the king's brothers, the Count of Provence, subsequently Louis XVIII., and the Count d'Artois, who succeeded him as Charles X. Marie Antoinette herself was at all times economical, and even frugal, in her pleasures; managing her private income with such method that her servants were at times disposed to find fault with her precision as unbecoming a sovereign.† But the two princes, young as they were, were beginning to show that they looked on prodigality and licence as inalienable privileges of royal blood; and Turgot was prepared to find them determined opponents of his reforming policy. He was soon to learn that he had an antagonist, if unavowed, far more effective, in the ministry itself. He began without delay to carry

* Le don de joyeux avènement.

† Madame de Campan, c. v. She is an unimpeachable witness on this point, because she disapproves of the economy which she records: "La reproche de prodigalité, généralement faite à la reine, est la plus inconcevables des erreurs populaires qui se soient établies dans le monde sur son caractère. Elle avait entièrement le défaut contraire; et je pourrais prouver qu'elle portait souvent l'économie jusqu'à des détails d'une mesquinerie blâmable, surtout dans une souveraine."

had been the pretext on which he had justified the act, there could be no question that it had been calculated greatly to promote the future tranquillity of the kingdom, and especially to facilitate the adoption of a reforming policy. Their suppression, too, had been attended with no practical inconvenience, since the tribunals which had been established in their stead had been found to work well, and to be quite as equitable and more prompt in their dispensation of justice. Maurepas, however, had hardly been installed in his office before he conceived the idea of re-establishing them. He proposed it to the king in council, and for some weeks the whole kingdom, princes and princesses, courtiers, statesmen, and the populace at large, were vehemently agitated by the discussion of the proposal, though few perceived how great an influence its decision was destined to have on all the subsequent events of the reign, on all the future history of the nation.

In what may be called the court itself, the royal family and the council of the ministry, parties were pretty equally balanced. In favour of the Parliaments were the queen, influenced in her view of the case by her grateful predilection for Choiseul, who was their steady champion; the king's younger brother; the Duke of Orleans, and his son, who seemed to consider the patronage of the Parliaments an hereditary duty of their family, descended to them from the days of the Fronde; and the Prince de Conti, whose object was to secure an ally whenever he might wish to embarrass any Government. The ministers who took the same side besides Maurepas, were Miromesnil, the keeper of the seals, who could not but be favorable to a body of which he himself had at one time been a member, and Sartines, who, by the favour of the prime minister,

had succeeded Turgot at the Marine. But it cannot be said that any one, either prince or minister, advanced any argument in support of the decision they advocated, unless we may call by such a name the assertion of Maurepas himself that Fleury had never found the management of the Parliaments a task beyond his capacity, and that he himself, when formerly a member of the Government, had, though in an inferior office, been often able to lead them to resolutions which he desired, and to turn them from votes which he deprecated. On the other side were the king himself, who had been taught by his father to look on the Parliament as a restless, ambitious, and dangerous body; the princesses his aunts, who, however, had no better reason for the entreaties with which they implored him to leave things as he found them than that such conduct was a proper mark of respect for the late king; and the Count de Provence, who on this occasion showed a greater capacity for political affairs than he had previously had credit for, delivering to the king a carefully drawn memorial in which he argued from the constant resistance which former sovereigns had experienced from their Parliaments how fortunate he himself was to find them extinguished, and how greatly their resuscitation was to be deprecated. Of the ministers, Vergennes, Du Muy, and the Duke de la Vrillière, who still retained the post of steward of the household which he had filled under Louis XV., supported Turgot; and Turgot argued against the recall with great vigour and force both on general principles and on those drawn from the time. He contended that bodies like the Parliaments were always actuated by a spirit of brotherhood to act in combination against superior authority; that, being free from all individual responsibility, they

were inaccessible to considerations of prudence or gratitude ; that, if re-established they would be sure to return to their traditional policy of claiming political functions, of seeking to unite legislative to judicial powers, and in pursuit of this object would place themselves in constant opposition to the crown ; and that at the present moment such resistance would be an almost insurmountable obstacle to the successful prosecution of those reforms which Louis had already sanctioned, and which he knew to be indispensable. It is inexplicable how arguments such as these, aided as they were by the king's personal prepossessions, failed to succeed ; but they did fail. It is probable that, as Marie Antoinette had been overruled in the selection of the prime minister, Louis wished to make amends to her by yielding on the next point on which she was interested ; and he replied to Turgot's arguments, so far as they were drawn from the influence which the recall of the Parliaments would have on the success of his own measures of reform, that they at least should not be compromised, since he himself would maintain him and them against all opposition.

Turgot did not doubt his sincerity, but could not fail to see that, while he was thus relying on his own strength, he was giving undeniable evidence of his weakness, by showing that he had not resolution enough to abide by his own judgment. At the beginning of November Louis held a Bed of Justice, at which he formally restored the Parliaments, making the members a speech in which he represented his grandfather's suppression of their Company as merely intended for a warning, and admonishing them to avoid giving him cause to visit them with a similar chastisement ; after which Miromesnil closed the sitting by reading a number of new edicts designed to prevent a recurrence

of the quarrels between the Parliament and the ministry, the most important of which was one that, though still granting the councillors the right of remonstrance, prohibited its being renewed till after the registration of the edict to which it might refer, when of course it must be wholly inoperative. A further security, it was imagined, was taken for the future good behaviour of Parliament by maintaining the tribunal which Maupeou had erected in its stead, under the name of the Grand Council, as a sort of standing menace to the councillors in case they should be inclined again to prove refractory.

It was soon apparent that no precautions against their misconduct could be superfluous. In their first reply to the royal lecture they spoke of their re-establishment as an unavoidable concession on the king's part to the wishes of his people, and a return to the fundamental principles of the monarchy, and presently ventured even to protest against the laws which had been enacted at the very Bed of Justice at which they had been re-established, as having been registered without due examination, and therefore illegally. Even without this exhibition of their unabated insolence, Turgot must have despaired of a successful accomplishment of all his schemes; the most important of all being the putting all classes on a footing of equality in respect of taxation, and the abolition of all privileges of exemption, a measure which in its former existence the Parliament had always stubbornly resisted. Nevertheless, he proceeded with unfaltering steadiness in the path which he had marked out. He reanimated public credit by paying up the arrears in many cases due to the fundholders. He refused renewal of the leases of the taxes which had been farmed out at prices invariably

far beneath their value. He reduced the expense of collection by the suppression of a great number of sinecure or superfluous offices; and he announced his intention of extending over the whole kingdom the system which had produced such prosperity in Limoges, the abolition of *corvées*, and the freedom of trade, especially in corn, between the different parts of the kingdom. He was recognising the soundness of the economical principles of both Quesnay and Gournai, and carrying them farther than either by establishing the compatibility of the doctrines of each with those of the other.

It was not strange, indeed we have seen that Turgot himself had expected that so many novelties should excite considerable opposition; and the resistance which was encountered by one of them, the edict for the establishment of a free trade in corn, deserves especial remark from the celebrity which was subsequently attained by a man who now put himself forward as one of the leaders of the movement. M. Necker, a Genevese banker, wrote a pamphlet against it, full indeed of sophistry (since it directed its chief attacks against the removal of restrictions of the trade with foreign countries, while as yet Turgot had only removed those which hampered the traffic between the different provinces of the kingdom), but plausibly argued and neatly expressed, and as such attractive to a large number of superficial readers, and loudly extolled by all who had prejudged the question in the same spirit. The arguments, however, by which the minister was opposed were not all of a peaceful character, nor was their author in every instance avowed. At the beginning of 1775 the price of bread rose slightly in Paris and in some of the agricultural districts, and, as if the rise had been the consequence

of the new regulations, mobs collected and broke out in formidable riots. It was plain enough that their own measures would not tend to lower the prices of which they complained, for they broke open granaries, stopped and plundered waggons laden with corn for the markets, and destroyed all the grain which they found. It was equally plain that they were not excited by any privations which they themselves suffered, for they were generally drunk, and manifestly well supplied with money. It seemed certain that they were the instruments of some great man, and Conti was commonly named as their chief instigator.* Louis himself was alarmed; when some bands of the rioters came to Versailles, and shouted their complaints, he came forth into the balcony and condescended to pacify them by promising the reduction of the price of bread to its former level. But Turgot, rightly judging that, in the case of a tumult of such a character, conciliation would look too like timidity, resolved on repressing it by sterner methods, regarding such a course as the more necessary because the Parliament showed an inclination to take the outbreak, which was rapidly assuming the magnitude of an insurrection, under its protection. Seconded by Du Muy, he prevailed on the king to support him in vigorous measures of repression. Some regiments were sent to disperse the rioters wherever they assembled, and the Parliament was summoned to a Bed of Justice, and strictly enjoined to put the law in

* Lacretelle, however, iv. 368, attributes the outbreak, which he calls "la guerre des farines," to a conspiracy of the privileged classes in general against the minister, naming especially the Parliament and the clergy, and affirming positively that "un salaire qui leur (à une multitude de vagabondes) était payé par des hommes qu'on ne saurait nommer aujourd'hui avec assez de certitude, excitait leurs fureurs factices."

force against all who were guilty. The mere show of determination was sufficient to restore order; the rioters fled before the troops; a few who were seized were made instant examples of and hanged, and after a few days an edict of amnesty relieved their accomplices from their fears.

But each instance of opposition to the minister, in spite of its being quelled, encouraged similar efforts. In the summer of 1775 Louis was crowned at Rheims with ceremonies of great magnificence, which were continued through several days, and the higher clergy were furious against Turgot when they found him desirous that the king should omit from his coronation oath a promise to exterminate heretics. To retaliate on him they united to send a deputation to the king with a remonstrance on the state of the kingdom, in regard partly to the general dissoluteness of manners and partly to the degree of toleration which, as they affirmed, the Huguenots still enjoyed. They could not have intended to throw ridicule on their own remonstrance by the character of the persons whom they commissioned to present it: but, if they did not, no circumstance can more strongly show how universal and incurable was the corruption of every class of society; for, though one of the commissioners, Pompignan, Archbishop of Vienne, was a man of decent reputation, his colleagues, Loménie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, and the Abbé of Talleyrand Périgord, too well known in subsequent days, were men of utterly profligate lives and avowed unbelievers. Another of their demands was for restrictions on the freedom of the press; but, though both the matter and the language of their remonstrance showed their mischievous inclinations, there was so much reason to think that the dignitaries who

framed it were not supported by the great body of the parochial clergy, who in the late outbreak had shown every disposition to aid the Government by tranquillizing the people, that Turgot felt he could safely advise the king to take no further notice of it than was involved in making a civil reply to the deputation.

It happened, too, that just at this time he was encouraged and really strengthened by a change which took place in one department of the ministry. The Duke de la Vrillière had hitherto retained the place of steward of the household which he had held in the last reign, and which, as many matters of police passed through his hands, was one of considerable political importance. He resigned in the summer of 1775, and Maurepas, who was under great apprehension lest the queen should succeed in procuring his office for one of Choiseul's adherents, gladly adopted Turgot's suggestion of offering it to Lamoignon de Malesherbes, the president of the Aides, a man of perfect integrity, courage, and ability, and deeply imbued with the principles of economy and general policy which Turgot desired to carry out. He had, indeed, occupied himself in a rigorous investigation of the different fiscal abuses both in the imposition and the collection of the taxes long before Turgot became a public character; and he now showed his sincerity by exacting a pledge for the immediate removal of some of the most flagrant abuses as a preliminary condition of his accepting the office which was pressed upon him.

Supported by such a colleague Turgot began to develop his views in greater fulness, and to mature measures of political as well as of financial reform; for it was plain that, as had been practically acknow-

ledged in the days of Sully and Colbert, the financial and the rest of the departments of the Government so reciprocally affected each other that no reform introduced into the one could be effective if it failed also to comprehend the rest. The cause of all the evils which required correction, as Turgot expressed himself in an able memorial which he submitted to his royal master, was that in fact the nation had hitherto possessed no constitution at all, and he aspired to lay the foundation of an improved financial system in a thorough revision and new organization of the whole Government. His plan, so far as he first explained it, would seem to have been dictated by the system of provincial parliaments which he already found in existence. He proposed the erection of a number of provincial assemblies, and of one great central assembly to be composed of deputies from each provincial assembly. The subordinate details, the precise amount of the qualifications to be required for a deputy and for an elector, and the extent and degree of authority which should belong to the assemblies, he left as yet undecided; though he apparently so far copied the constitution of the English Parliament as to look on the possession of a certain amount of landed property as indispensable for every member. But he had no opportunity of developing his idea further; while maturing it he was also pressing on other regulations which, as designed for the emancipation of the trading and lower classes from unwholesome restrictions, admitted of less delay; and in the spring of 1776 he brought down to the Parliament a set of six edicts, the most important of which abolished *corvées*, and also guilds, which in their working raised such almost countless obstacles to the artisans in different trades becoming master workmen, that they

were practically a grievance not only to the artisans but to the whole community. The others removed or diminished market duties, harbour duties, and taxes on articles of primary necessity, such as tallow and soap. The result showed how correctly he had described the character of a body such as the Parliament, and had divined the consequences of its re-establishment. The *corvées*, pressing wholly on the working classes, in effect relieved the landed proprietors of many costly burdens. Their abolition would therefore impose those burdens on the landlords ; and though in no single instance could the expenditure required of them be beyond their means, or even considerable, yet the Parliament denounced the proposal, and were not ashamed to stand forward as the champions of a system which spared the rich at the expense of the poor. They even affirmed the inseparableness of these burdens from the condition of the peasant. In their own words, "The people of France was liable to the tax of the *taille* and of the *corvée* at discretion. Their liability was an article of the constitution which it was not even in the power of the king to change."* They absolutely refused to register the edicts ; Turgot was firm, and persuaded Louis for a moment to be so too. A Bed of Justice compelled the registration ; but each occasion for that expedient found the king less and less inclined to employ it, and the shrewdest courtiers began to predict the speedy fall of the minister who made it necessary.

Unfortunately at this moment Turgot's were not

* "Le peuple en France était taillable et corvéable à volonté ; et c'était un article de la constitution qu'il n'était pas au pouvoir du roi de changer."

the only reforms which provoked resistance. Du Muy died in the autumn of 1775, just after he had received the marshal's staff, and was succeeded by the Count de Saint Germain, a friend of Maurepas, whose previous history seemed a singular preparation for a minister of state. He had been originally a Jesuit, but finding the strict obedience enjoined on the members of that brotherhood insupportable to his headstrong and fickle temper, he quitted it and became a soldier. Carrying the same insubordinate disposition into his new profession, he killed one of his superior officers in a duel, and, flying to a foreign country, entered the service of the Elector-palatine. From that he passed into the Austrian army, and fought under the great Eugene in his last campaign against the Turks. Having again quarrelled with his commanders he exchanged the uniform of the emperor for that of the Elector of Bavaria, and his Bavarian commission for one under Frederic of Prussia. Frederic conceived a high opinion of his military talents, but, as he would not relax the rules of discipline in his favour, St. Germain renounced his service also; and as this happened just at the time when Saxe was commanding the French forces in Flanders, he applied to that great officer, and by his influence was readmitted into the service of his native land with the military rank which he had acquired under his different foreign masters. In the Seven Years' War he was again employed, and again quarrelled with his commander, though, as that was Soubise, it is possible that the right may have been on his side. It was certain that, almost alone of the army, he had displayed both courage and conduct at Rosbach, though, as he was not a boaster, he limited his own relation of his achievements to the statement that he had not run

away as fast nor as far as his comrades. When he found that Soubise was supported by the court, he quarrelled with the court too, sent back to the king his order of St. Louis, and crossed over to Denmark. The Danes made him a marshal and minister of war; but, though he had now no professional superior, he quarrelled with the Danish Government. By his own account he was at once the most pacific and the worst-treated of mankind; he compared himself to a naked man pursued by wasps, and stung incessantly without the power of retaliating. After some years of sojourn and travel in foreign countries, on the death of Louis XV. he returned to France. In his different campaigns he had amassed a considerable fortune, and he was looking forward to a luxurious old age in his own country when the bankruptcy of some merchants to whom he had entrusted his savings reduced him to poverty. Strange to say, his misfortune rendered him more manageable; he remembered the devotional exercises of his early youth in the Jesuits college, and was living in modest and devout contentment in a condition but little removed from that of a peasant, when Maurepas summoned him from his cabin to superintend the war department and govern the army.

If the insight which in his adventurous life he had acquired into every kind of warfare and the duties of every description of force in one respect qualified him for such a post, at a moment when reforms were needed in the army as well as in every other branch of the national service; on the other hand, he had learnt lessons in some of his campaigns which unfitted him for the task of framing new regulations for an army of his own countrymen. His military experience, as we have seen, had been acquired chiefly

among the Germans, in whose service a far more rigorous discipline prevailed than had ever been known in France, and was maintained by methods which the French soldier was not disposed to endure. He resolved not only to introduce the German precision and punctuality not only into the military drill of the French regiments, but into the daily habits of barrack and camp when the soldier was off duty. And because in the Prussian army obedience was enforced by severe canings and blows with the flat of the sabre, the French privates, and even the non-commissioned officers, were expected to submit to the same treatment. Their discontent showed itself in language which fell but little short of mutiny. The feeling spread even among the superior officers, the old Marshal de Broglie pronouncing vehemently against insulting the high spirit of his countrymen by foreign punishments. Other measures of the new war-minister were equally unpopular. The splendid brigade of the king's household troops, which had decided the victory on many a hard-fought field, was reduced by the disbanding of several corps. Even the musketeers were dismissed; and the compliment paid to them of allowing them to march to Valenciennes to deposit their regimental colours in the great church, only served to attract the attention of others besides soldiers to the measure. The pecuniary saving thus effected was considerable, for no portion of the army was so costly. But among the sagacious thinkers of the day who wished well to the crown, and who had shrewdness to perceive that the reforms which were meditated, however indispensable they might be, could only be carried out by overbearing a stubborn resistance in many quarters, men were not wanting to condemn as short-sighted an economy which at such

a time deprived the king of a body of troops especially devoted to his person, and from their ancient renown always popular among their countrymen. Still greater dissatisfaction was shown when the minister proposed to break up the magnificent establishment of the Invalides, the most solid monument of the glories of Louis XIV., into a number of small hospitals in the provinces; and to treat the great military school in a similar manner, with the additional novelty of selecting the teachers, not from veterans of the wars, but from monks of the different convents. The last measure affording also a fertile topic for ridicule, as if, now that St. Germain's old order of Jesuits was abolished, he was seeking to revive the principles of the soldier monk who had founded it in so uncongenial a body as the army.

The discontent which he thus aroused could not fail to be reflected in some degree on the theory and project of reform; and thus to put another weapon into the hands of those who were seeking the overthrow of Turgot as the representative and head of the whole system. And the king, who, in spite of his promises of firmness, was easily discouraged, was probably also set against his great minister by an essay which Voltaire published with the express object of recommending his measures, especially that of the abolition of the *corvées*, to the higher classes; for Louis held Voltaire in especial disfavour, and had hitherto been firm in his refusal to receive him at court. Turgot's friend, Malesherbes, also, who had only accepted office on condition of being permitted to introduce reforms into his department, was as unsuccessful as St. Germain, though his proposals were dictated by the strictest wisdom and justice; and though, instead of rendering his countrymen liable to novel punishments, he aimed at relieving

them from arbitrary inflictions such as no other nation ever submitted to in an equal degree. He desired to abolish the warrants known as *lettres de cachet*, and other abuses in the practice of the ordinary tribunals, which, especially in matters of debt, gave the rich and noble unfair advantages over the poor. Strange as it may seem, even those who were most exposed to suffer from such a state of things did not wish it altered. The middle classes in general drew a distinction between immunity from taxation, and exemption from other restraints, and looked upon it as natural for the nobles to have exclusive privileges in the courts of law; and for the king to have absolute power over the liberties, if not over the lives, of his subjects, they regarded as inseparable from the royal dignity.* The resistance to the proposals of Malesherbes was therefore very general; and when he found that it was headed by Maurepas himself, he abandoned all hope of carrying them, and resigned his post. Louis accepted his resignation with ex-

* See some remarkable letters of Dr. Moore, written a year or two before this time. He relates that he heard "an Englishman enumerate the advantages of the British Constitution to a circle of French bourgeois, and explain to them in what manner the people of their rank of life were protected from the insolence of the courtiers and nobility," &c. "They sympathized with the great; they seemed to feel for *their* want of importance. One observed: 'C'est peu de chose d'être noble chez vous,' and another, shaking his head, added, 'Ce n'est pas naturel, tout cela.' When mention was made that the king of Great Britain could not impose a tax by his own authority . . . they said, with some degree of satisfaction, 'cependant, c'est assez beau, cela.' But when he continued, informing them that the king had not the power to encroach on the liberty of the meanest of his subjects, and that if he or the minister did, damages were recoverable in a court of law, a loud and prolonged 'Diable!' issued from every mouth . . . They seemed to think the king must be the most oppressed and injured of mankind; and one of them at last, addressing himself to the English politician, said, 'Tout ce que je puis vous dire, monsieur, c'est que votre pauvre roi est bien à plaindre.'"—Moore's "View of Society and Manners in France," vol. i. letter 7.

pressions of sympathy, which, if they showed his kindness of heart as a man, equally evinced his incapacity to comprehend his own duties. "I wish," said he, that I could resign too." The consciousness thus avowed, that he could not throw off his responsibilities, should have stimulated him to act up to them; but he could not perceive that the duty which they imposed on him was not that of allowing a virtuous minister to retire, but that of maintaining him in his post and supporting him in his policy. And the fatal habit of yielding against his convictions was one which, as saving him from present trouble, was sure to grow upon him, as it did till it destroyed him. Their victory in the case of Malesherbes encouraged those interested in the retention of abuses to more vigorous attacks on Turgot. They tried to argue, they tried to ridicule the king out of his partiality for him; they sang under the royal windows songs purporting that his influence was such that if he presently should persuade Louis that he too was an abuse, he would sanction the abolition of himself. Turgot saw plainly that he himself should be the next sacrifice; that his existence, as he wrote to one of his friends, hung by a single thread; but he probably did not anticipate that his fall was as near at hand as it proved to be, or that Louis, who had so cordially promised to support him, would be so entirely alienated from him as to dismiss him with studied discourtesy and harshness. Such, however, was the case. Vergennes, who had agreed with him on the question of the recall of the Parliaments, had turned against him, urging upon Louis that he was seeking to establish English principles of government; and there was as yet no idea so settled in the king's mind as the dislike of

English customs, which he identified to a great extent with the philosophical school among his own subjects who extolled them. When Turgot tried to stimulate him to firmness in the support of measures which he had already sanctioned, and of which he admitted the propriety, by warnings drawn from the example of Charles I. of England, who, as the minister read his history, had perished through his want of that most kingly and statesmanlike virtue, Louis looked on his exhortations, so enforced, almost in the light of a threat, and secretly resented them. At last, without even granting his minister a personal interview, he sent him a curt letter of dismissal, which reached him as he was drawing up a state paper. He laid down the pen, with the remark that his successor could finish it; and retired with the dignified boast that he had at least afforded no room for imputations on either his courage or his integrity.

Short-lived as his authority had been, and greatly as he had been thwarted in its exercise, he had already made great progress in the replenishment of the treasury. The improved terms which he had obtained from the farmers of the taxes had increased the revenue derived from that source sixfold; and he had thus been able to pay off a large amount of arrears, and to dispense with anticipating the income of the coming year, as had been the practice of his predecessors. In spite of the extraordinary expenses incurred in the preceding year for the coronation, he had diminished the entire debt of the nation by a hundred and twelve millions of livres, or upwards of four millions sterling; and, by these judicious measures he had so raised the credit of the whole nation that the interest of money, which in the last

reign had been five-and-a-half, had fallen to four per cent.* He had pointed out to his successors with unimpeachable clearness the course by which, by which alone, but by which to a certainty the St te could be extricated from its financial difficulties.

He returned with cheerfulness to the literary and scientific pursuits which he had never wholly laid aside. It had been his aim to rival the English statesman Bacon, in showing that the attainment of almost universal knowledge was not incompatible with the calls which public affairs made on the attention of a statesman; and probably few of his countrymen but Voltaire equalled him in the variety or extent of his knowledge. He was a sound classical scholar, and well versed in nearly every language of modern Europe; deeply read in history; and there were few of the exact sciences in which he had not attained proficiency. Nor did he neglect the lighter accomplishments of the muses, but often amused his leisure by poetry, and even made an attempt to naturalize blank verse in the literature of his nation. Such a man was easily consoled for the loss of official power. But he did not yet think his political existence terminated. Confident in the soundness of his principles, he looked forward to the day when they would force themselves on the general conviction; and in this belief he devoted much of his time to mature his system in all its parts, that when he should be recalled no delay might be interposed to its adoption by his own want of complete preparation. He was disappointed. The time came indeed when the soundness of the greater part of his views, and

* "Œuvres de Turgot." Notice de Dupont de Nemours, I. 396, quoted by Amedée Renée.

the practical wisdom of his projects, was generally acknowledged, and when the minister of the day endeavoured to carry them out. But he did not live to be that minister. In the spring of 1781 he died of gout, an hereditary malady which had proved fatal to many members of his family. He was only forty-nine years of age. Had he been spared but two months longer he might very probably have been restored to office ; had he survived to the end of the next year he must have been. Whether, in such an event, the clearness of his views, and the firmness with which he would have maintained them, would have sufficed to save the country from the evils which the rashness of Calonne, the profligate carelessness of Loménie, the vacillation and vanity of Necker, each in its degree contributed to bring upon it, is a question which has afforded a theme for discussion to many writers, and which of course must ever remain undetermined. But there is no difficulty in deciding that of all her sons France had not one at that time whom she could less afford to lose, with a higher capacity for the direction of public affairs, and a more incorruptible integrity as the guide of his talents.

CHAPTER XXXII.

No other change was made in the ministry. In the management of the revenue Turgot was succeeded by a man named Clugny, who had, indeed, held at Bordeaux an office similar to that which Turgot had formerly filled at Limoges ; without, however, performing Turgot's services, or earning Turgot's reputation. Fortunately his control of the finances did not last long, as he died before the end of the year. But he found time to do serious harm. He looked upon Turgot as having fallen because he attacked the privileged classes, and therefore, in the hope of avoiding his fate, he adopted the opposite plan of in every matter consulting their wishes. He even suspended the edict for abolishing the *corvées*, though Louis had just compelled the Parliament to register it ; and in order to avoid the necessity for abolishing the exemptions from taxation, he instituted a lottery, than which the invention of financiers has contrived no more pernicious mode of raising money : though it must not be imputed to him as a peculiar fault, since he was only following the example of the English ministers, and since it was not till within the memory of the present generation that the practice of thus turning the vicious passion of the multitude for gambling to the profit of the State was renounced by our own Government.

It takes so much less time to 'do mischief than to do good, that, brief as had been his period of authority, Clugny's reckless unskilfulness had undone most of the benefits which Turgot seemed to have secured. Corruption had again raised its head, and had brought back the old deficiency of the revenue. It was not strange, therefore, that the vacant appointment was not greatly coveted, or that both the nobles and the public men of France should be willing to see it conferred on one who belonged to neither class. M. Necker, whose opposition to parts of Turgot's system we have already mentioned, a Genevese Protestant by birth, had been settled for some years in Paris as a banker, and, having retired from business, was now invested with an official character as the minister residentiary of his native city, a post which naturally brought him in contact with the leading statesmen, and also with the court and fashionable society of the capital.* He had early put himself forward as a student of political finance by a panegyric on Colbert, which had been honoured with a prize by the Academy, and afterwards by a treatise on free trade in corn, in which he set himself to controvert some of Turgot's principles. He had also stood forth as the advocate of the India Company when, after the disgrace and death of Lally, Choiseul had meditated its suppression, and by his efforts in its cause he had acquired many influential friends; and, as in the course of his argument he was led to oppose the doctrines of the Economists, he came to be regarded as in some degree the champion of the party opposed to them. He had travelled in England, where he had carefully studied the financial

* Madame de Staël, "Considérations sur la Rév. Française," vol. i. c. 4.

system adopted in that country, and had endeavoured to trace the causes of that superiority of English credit over that of any other country, of which the foundation had been laid by Montague, and which no rebellion either at home or abroad seemed materially to shake. His capacity for managing transactions of private commerce was proved by the fact of his having amassed an enormous fortune. And he had likewise acquired the friendship of the Marquis de Pezai, a nobleman who was distantly related to Maurepas, and who, having been appointed some years before to instruct the king in military tactics, had thus obtained some degree of his confidence on other matters.

De Pezai now pressed both on Maurepas and Louis his conviction that above all other men Necker had the talents calculated to extricate the kingdom from its difficulties; and accordingly, at the beginning of 1777, Necker was invited to office, and accepted it with eagerness, though he well knew that the difficulties which he was expected to surmount were far greater than those which had surrounded the object of his former panegyric, Colbert; and were hardly, if at all, inferior to those which confronted Sully, when, after years of civil war and anarchy, he undertook to restore order and plenty to an impoverished land. Necker was confident that similar triumphs were in store for himself; and he was not without talents, which, though considerable, were more limited in their character and less solid than their owner fancied them, nor without eminent virtues to guide them. He was fertile in resources, unimpeachably honest; though not always firm, he was courageous; he was eminently skilful in setting forth his projects with well-chosen arguments and luminous expression. It must be added that his intentions were always pure, and sin-

cerely directed to what he believed to be the true interests of the monarch and the country. Nor was it unimportant at such a crisis as that which the State was approaching, that he had an extensive acquaintance with foreign capitalists, who were generally disposed to regard him with confidence. The drawbacks to these qualifications for government were an occasional vacillation of mind, which led him at times to change his policy without any sufficient visible cause; and an excessive vanity, which was, perhaps, the chief cause of that vacillation, since it led him constantly to keep in view the plaudits of the populace as one principal motive of action. And the connexion with the moneyed interest which we have spoken of above as an auxiliary to his success, was perhaps in another sense an impediment to it, since his previous career as a money dealer from which it sprang, had an inevitable tendency to narrow his views even on financial subjects. These defects, however, and that more serious one in a statesman of being so prone to place implicit belief in abstract theories as to overlook the difficulties in the way of their practical adoption which either past experience or the slightest insight into the human character suggested, were as yet unsuspected. And the people in general, and more especially the Parisians, hailed his appointment with cordial approval and sanguine hope.

He had not the nominal rank of controller. Maurepas held the clergy in too much awe to venture to introduce a Protestant at once into so important a post; and the ostensible successor of Clugny was another intendant, M. Taboureau des Reaux, from Valenciennes; a new office, as director of the treasury, being invented for Necker. And even when, a few months afterwards, Taboureau retired, Necker did

not receive the title of controller-general, but was styled director-general; as that new name not conferring a place in the Council, seemed to make him less a member of the Government. He, like Turgot, signalized his appointment by an act of personal disinterestedness, declining, as he had not the name of a minister, to receive the emoluments. But the retirement of Taboureaux was not needed to augment his real power, which he began from the first to exercise with great industry and energy. In another respect also he resembled Turgot, since he too aspired to the character of a constitutional as well as a financial reformer; indeed, he had probably more ambition to be distinguished as a legislator than his more sober-minded successor; though like him he saw that the financial reforms must come first. The task which lay before him was harder than he was aware of. The administration of Clugny, brief as it was, had been so unskilful as well as lavish, that it had increased the deficiency of the year. This he knew, but he had no suspicion that his colleagues had resolved to plunge the kingdom into a war with England; and that he should soon be called on to supply funds for a contest which in the most prosperous times had been found to tax the resources of the country to the uttermost, and which must also disconcert the commercial arrangements to which he in great part trusted for the re-establishment of the finances on a healthy footing. Had he anticipated war, he could hardly, with all his confidence in his own ingenuity, have ventured to proclaim the system which he proposed to adopt.

Turgot had undertaken to restore the balance between income and expenditure without any increase of taxation, and therefore without raising fresh loans,

by an improved administration; but Necker, though he did not believe it possible to dispense with loans, undertook to abstain, equally with him, from any imposition of fresh taxes. He affirmed that there was still room for retrenchments of such magnitude that the sums to be saved would not only fill up the deficiency of the yearly revenue, but would also cover the interest of the new debt to be incurred; and he proceeded with great zeal and no little skill to endeavour to prove his assertions. The extinction of superfluous offices which Turgot had commenced he carried on to a much greater extent; the system of leasing out the taxes he abolished altogether, taking the whole revenue into the hands of the Crown, and appointing commissioners for each department of taxation, and collectors for every province. He ventured on one step of still greater boldness, considering how many ministers had owed their fall to a similar attempt. He issued an edict enforcing the collection of a property-tax of five per cent. from all classes; thus in this instance ignoring the whole system of exemption to which nobles, clergy, and Parliament clung with such pertinacity. It is a remarkable proof how general the conviction that measures of unusual stringency were necessary for the salvation of the State had by this time become, that even to this last measure no open opposition was made, and the Parliament registered the edict in silence. There was of course abundant discontent among all the classes affected by any of these reforms. The holders of the suppressed offices; the farmers of taxes; those newly enrolled among the tax-payers, all grumbled at the new arrangements; and, making common cause against the proposer of them, instead of taking their stand on their separate grievances, reviled Necker himself to Maurepas,

who was still the head of the ministry. Maurepas had not really more liking for him than his avowed enemies ; but under his existing responsibilities he knew not how to do without him. As was his wont, he parried the abuse heaped on the director-general by a jest : " If you will manage to pay the debts of the State," he replied to the grumblers, " I will give him up to you." But none of them was ready with any expedient which could show him qualified to replace the object of their abuse ; so Necker was left to prosecute his measures without present hindrance. He was, however, unconsciously awakening a more dangerous hostility when he began to urge a reduction of its expenditure on the court itself. The king personally was by no means inclined to expensive pleasures. He was strictly faithful to the queen ; he disliked gambling. His favourite amusement next to hunting was the practice of handicraft arts, such as those of the stonecutter or the locksmith, in which he displayed not only manual skill, but considerable inventive ingenuity ;* somewhat unroyal pastimes, but more innocent and less burdensome to his people than his grandfather's relaxations. The queen, as has been already mentioned, was equally free from any charge of extravagance ; but the courtiers, though less profligate in morals than Richelieu and the parasites of the last sovereign, were for the most part equally inclined to look on the court as bound to incur the most preposterous expenses for their profit. When Necker boasted of the extent of his retrenchments, they argued that the greater they were, the less was the need of extending them to details which the royal dignity required should be left unquestioned. The

* *Madame de Campan, c. v.*

king's brothers secretly lent their countenance to this view ; being, indeed, as personally concerned in it as any, since they, and more especially the younger, the Count d'Artois, had already made more than one application to Maurepas to pay his debts out of the public purse, while if Necker should wholly prevail such applications must hereafter be fruitless ; and this accumulation of influence against him was not without its effect. Even Necker's colleagues began to be in many instances unfriendly to his policy ; Sartines, the minister of marine, going the length of publicly avowing his disapproval of it. Maurepas too began to feel piqued at Necker's filling a greater space in the eye of the public than himself, and Vergennes showed a decided inclination to abandon him ; the cause of which was probably a fear lest, if he should prove unable to hold his ground, he might involve the ministry in his fall.

Necker, however, was resolved to bear down all opposition. When the Parliament of Normandy took an independent line and resisted his abolition of exemptions, he induced Louis to summon the members to Versailles, and to reprimand them severely for their contumacy ; and when the members persisted in their resistance, and, drawing in the Parliament of Grenoble to follow their example, offered to resign their offices if their conduct was still disapproved, he persuaded the king to accept their resignation. He even threw one man into prison who criticised his plans with a freedom which he construed as libellous ; and then proceeded to fulfil the most daring of his promises by bringing forward an edict for a loan of eighty millions ; while, to justify his demand, he did not scruple to proclaim to the whole world, even to those whom he expected to lend the money, the greatness of

the embarrassments which rendered it indispensable. Such a frankness was not usual among continental financiers, but the result justified his confidence, and proved that it was better to let capitalists know the worst, than to give them reason to apprehend that worse than was explained to them remained untold. He divided the loan into two portions ; one of which was to be advanced on annuity, the other was to be paid by instalments, a certain number of bonds being liquidated each year till the whole debt was discharged. And so satisfactory were his statement and his proposal deemed, that the whole sum was procured without either difficulty or delay. Even before the edict was registered a few capitalists had taken the whole loan, with a view of making a profit out of the division of it among their clients, as the English bankers were in the habit of doing ; and, though the interest offered scarcely exceeded four per cent. they were not disappointed. It was evident that already Necker had repaired the mischief done by Clugny, and restored the national credit to the height at which Turgot had left it.

But this undeniable success did not abate or conciliate the factious spirit of the Parliament. When the edict was brought before them for registration Duval d'Epresménil, a councillor who in the subsequent troubles achieved for a while a great celebrity, which he expiated by a miserable end, led the opposition, and denounced the whole system and every separate act of the director-general as an unpatriotic adoption of English ideas and practices. The registration was carried by only a narrow majority ; but on this occasion the Parliaments of the provinces declined to imitate the conduct of their Parisian brethren ; they were almost unanimous in their approval of the

loan ; and one company of great influence, that of Metz, presented the Minister with a formal address of approval and congratulation.

Encouraged by his financial success, he proceeded to mark out a plan of legislative reform also. He felt the truth which Turgot had before enunciated, that the real evil in the kingdom was not the embarrassment of the finances, nor the disorders and abuses in one department or another, but one which in truth was the cause of all the others, the fact that the nation had no fixed constitution ; and desiring, like Turgot, to create a legislative body, and borrowing a part of his idea, he thought to find what he wanted in a number of provincial assemblies. They were not, however, to be representative bodies elected by the inhabitants of the different provinces, as Turgot had designed, but they were to be wholly nominated by the king, who was only to be so far fettered in his choice that the proportions in which he was to select the members from the nobles, the clergy, and the commons or third estate, were prescribed in the edict. The nobles were to furnish four, the clergy four, the commons eight, and the sixteen members thus provided were themselves to nominate thirty-six colleagues. It was therefore plain that assemblies so appointed, however nominally independent, would be in reality subservient to the crown, and no proposal which either he or any other minister had made had ever been less acceptable to the Parliament. The councillors perceived that the existence of such bodies with a recognised power of legislation, though ever so limited, would be absolutely fatal to the pretensions which they themselves had so perseveringly advanced. But their opposition was disregarded ; and in one or two provinces, in Berri and Upper Guienne,

the assemblies were convoked, and instantly sanctioned throughout their jurisdiction the abolition of *corvées*, the equalization of taxation, and other measures which, though less contested, were not unimportant parts of the meditated reform.

But while thus apparently successful both in vanquishing opposition and in the results of his domestic policy, so far as there was time for it to be seen, his colleagues induced Louis to adopt a foreign policy which could not fail to neutralize all his measures of economy. They acknowledged the independence of the United States of America, at that moment in revolt against and at war with Great Britain; and without the slightest cause of complaint against the British Government plunged wantonly into war, solely because they thought its struggle with its transatlantic colonies held out a probability that such a war might be prosecuted with advantage. From the first commencement of the difference between England and her colonies Vergennes had been anxious to assist the Americans; he had inspired more than one of his colleagues with the same desire; and, with a view to a rupture, Sartines, the minister of marine, had been energetic in his endeavours to put the navy on a footing which might enable it to cope with the English fleets. Even the king, though generally of a peaceable disposition, had been led by his dislike of everything English to listen to the secretary's arguments that the embarrassments of England would soon afford him an opportunity of retrieving the losses and discredit of the Seven Years' War and the Peace of 1763; and hesitated solely because his instinct as an absolute king suggested to him how inconsistent with his own position it would be to aid the subjects of another monarch in

rebellion. Such scruples were sure, sooner or later, to be overruled, and as early as the beginning of 1776 he consented to receive a secret envoy. The agent selected was the most unscrupulous of all the enemies of the British Government, Silas Deane, who had hired an incendiary to set fire to the British dockyards. He obtained from the Government a liberal supply of money and arms, and a distinct intimation that larger assistance might soon be hoped for; and so generally was it understood in Paris that the French Government was only wearing a mask which was soon to be laid aside, that one young noble, who subsequently rose to great notoriety, the Marquis de la Fayette, crossed over to America and entered the American service. As yet he had hardly arrived at manhood, and at no period of his life did he display the very slightest capacity either civil or military; but he was received with exultation by Washington as a forerunner of more valuable auxiliaries, and was complimented by a commission as major-general. At last, in February, 1778, a formal treaty of alliance between France and the United States was signed at Paris, and a few weeks afterwards war was declared between France and England.

At the last moment Louis had hesitated more than ever, and with prophetic fears warned Vergennes that the treaty was concluded against his judgment. He had probably been confirmed in his doubts of the propriety of aiding the colonists against their sovereign by his brother-in-law the emperor, who in the autumn of the preceding year had paid a visit to Paris, and though in general his conduct there was neither wise nor dignified, yet on more than one occasion he expressed his opinion of the necessity of all sovereigns who understood their own interest discountenancing

the attempt of any people to throw off their allegiance and to establish a republican government, with a terseness and force which made great impression on the vacillating mind of Louis. But Joseph had hardly returned to Vienna when the news of the surrender of the British General Burgoyne with his whole army reached France, and the war party was so much strengthened by so unlooked-for and unprecedented an occurrence that Louis found it irresistible, and yielded against his own convictions. He had good reason to disapprove of the war in which he was now engaging, for, as regarded the country of which he thus made himself the enemy, it was absolutely unjustifiable. He did not even allege the slightest provocation on the part of England; and, as regarded his own country, it was certain that, if the war were ever so successful, the expenditure which it would necessitate must throw his finances into greater disorder than ever, and postpone to a distant period those reforms for which he was personally most solicitous, and which none of his ministers denied to be indispensable. The sole temptation which even Vergennes held out to gain his consent was the chance that, as the American war seemed already sufficient to tax the whole resources of England, some acquisitions might be made at her expense by a fresh antagonist; but though modern French writers* have not scrupled to affirm such an expectation sufficient to make war a duty, such an argument is in reality an assertion that

* M. Amedée Renée, the continuer of Sismondi's History, does not hesitate to say, speaking of the conditions of the Peace of Paris in 1763, which he looks on as injurious and insulting, "Tant d'affronts, de si rudes abus de la victoire, n'avaient-ils pas constitué pour un pays qui avait encore du sang dans les veines, le devoir d'une guerre à la première occasion, et même un peu l'obligation de la faire naître?" C. ii.

justice and right are to be utterly disregarded whenever might offers a prospect of trampling on them with advantage. If such an argument were generally adopted and admitted as sufficient to justify war, it would obviously make permanent peace impossible. The weaker nations would always be in fear of an unprovoked attack on the part of those which might be stronger, and Europe would be brought back to the condition of ancient Greece, when treaties of peace were made for a fixed period, and when the expiry of that period was held to be a sufficient ground for the renewal of war, which in that age was thus admitted to be the natural state of mankind.

But if the wickedness of this war was great, its impolicy was still greater. No war between France and England can ever be politic for either country. The wealth and greatness of France is chiefly internal, depending on the fertility of her soil, the excellence of her climate, and, in a still higher degree, on the inventive and dexterous genius of her people, unequalled in the ingenuity which they bring to bear on so many of the arts of civilization and the refinements of luxury. Her colonial possessions are not extensive, her commerce does not correspond to the extent of her seaboard, nor to the excellence of her harbours. Beyond her own boundaries, therefore, she has but little to tempt the ambition or cupidity of England or any other country, while within her own boundaries the magnitude of her army, the most invincible force on the whole continent, would make invasion by any other single nation an act of insanity. England, equally powerful in a different way, is equally unassailable; if her army, from its great inferiority in numbers, could not cope single-handed with that of France, her navy, sweeping the seas as

their absolute mistress, can prevent the two forces from coming into collision, by rendering invasion of her soil still more impracticable than a similar attack on France; and the same mighty arm is sufficient to preserve her rich colonies, and to protect her universal and almost boundless commerce.

These facts are now so universally acknowledged, that there is no statesman of either country who does not agree that the best interests of the two countries imperatively enjoin them to preserve peace with one another; while it is equally admitted that their harmonious co-operation will usually be found to secure tranquillity to the rest of the world. And though it is true that they were not so generally recognised a century ago, and indeed that they had not then been equally established by experience, the chief difference between the state of affairs at that and at the present time, made it even more expedient for France to avoid war, since she had more colonies to lose, and since her army was so far from being superior to that of other continental nations, that its recent victories bore no proportion in either number or magnitude to its defeats. And, as to her navy, even the advocates of war, who laid great stress on the augmentation which that force had received during thirteen years of peace, were secretly so convinced of its inferiority to the English marine, that they rested their hopes of being able to encounter it on procuring the aid of Spain, which, when they did obtain it, was found to be wholly unable to place them on a level with the enemy they had wantonly provoked.

The war, which lasted five years, may, as far as the European antagonists were concerned, be considered entirely naval. It was not till 1780 that France sent a land force to America, which did not exceed six

thousand men, under the Count de Rochambeau, and which produced no effect whatever on the result of the campaign in that country; and though Vergennes ostentatiously proclaimed an intention of invading England, and collected a large force on the coast of Normandy, under the veteran Marshal de Broglie, not a man of the army ever embarked on board a transport: the whole struggle was left to the fleets. Franklin, who since the conclusion of the treaty had been sent as minister to Paris, had recommended an attempt to gain one advantage by surprise, urging Sartines to despatch a fleet across the Atlantic to attack the English Admiral on the American station before he could learn the existence of war. And, though that treacherous plan was rejected, yet the first French force that reached the American waters found no enemy able at once to cope with it. It consisted of twelve sail of the line and four frigates, under the command of the Count d'Estaing, who had been bred a soldier, till in the last war, while serving in India, he had suddenly displayed superior nautical talents, and, changing his profession, had obtained the command of a squadron. In the opinion of his own countrymen, he exhibited in his character a romantic mixture of the gentleman and the pirate, giving in his conduct a marked preference to the latter;* and that feature of a pirate's disposition which leads him

* "Il y avait en lui un mélange romanesque de gentilhomme et de pirate; mais ce qui y dominait, et surtout dans sa manière de faire la guerre, c'était le forban."—Amedée Renée, c. iii. Lord Mahon (c. 58) mentions that he "began his career by breaking his parole when a prisoner of war to the English at Madras . . . and closed it with foul calumnies against his suffering queen, Marie Antoinette; calumnies that did not save him, as he had hoped, from partaking the same guillotine." It would seem, therefore, that the pirate may easily have predominated in his character, since the dash of gentleman must have been slight indeed.

to prefer selecting unarmed victims to resolute warriors as the objects of his attack he certainly displayed in his new command. Early in July, 1778, he reached Sandy Hook, where the British Admiral, Lord Howe, was lying with a fleet very inferior to his in number, and still more so in the size and power of his vessels. Comparatively weak, however, as he was, D'Estaing did not venture to sail in and attack him; and when towards the end of the month, Howe received a reinforcement which put the two fleets nearly on an equality, and consequently sailed out to meet him, D'Estaing did his best to avoid a battle. While the two commanders were manœuvring a heavy storm came on, which greatly damaged both the fleets; and all that Howe was able to effect was to bring on a slight skirmish, in which, with very little injury to his own ships, he inflicted heavy loss on his enemies; the *Cæsar* alone, a French seventy-four, losing 220 men killed and wounded.

D'Estaing retreated to Boston, and remained inactive till the end of the year, when he quitted his anchorage only to show his want of daring still more conspicuously. Each of the belligerents had succeeded in reducing one or two of the islands belonging to the other. The Marquis de Bouillé, the Governor of Martinique, had sent out an expedition which had captured Dominica, while the British Commodore Evans had expelled the French from Miquelin and St. Pierre; and these successes stimulated each side to endeavour to carry them further. D'Estaing moving to the south, was concerting with De Bouillé a plan for the conquest of Barbadoes, when he learnt that Admiral Barrington, with seven sail of the line and a few smaller vessels, had just arrived from England with a small force of soldiers on board, and

was preparing to attack Sainte Lucie. As he himself had a force nearly double that of the British commander, he hastened to save that valuable island; but Barrington, who was lying in Carenage Bay, a harbour with a narrow entrance, moored his best ships across it in a way to prevent the French from profiting by their superiority of numbers, beat them off twice, and so discouraged D'Estaing that he would not try the fortune of a third onset. He retreated, leaving Sainte Lucie to its fate; and on no occasion did he show himself equal in skill, much less in courage, to his opponents. In the spring of 1779 he received a splendid reinforcement, which raised his force to twenty-four sail of the line and twelve frigates, some of the ships which last joined him having also several thousand troops on board; and with such a splendid armament he had no difficulty in mastering St. Vincent and Grenada. But when Admiral Byron, though he had but twenty-one sail of the line and a single frigate, and though his ships were on an average far smaller than the French, came in pursuit of him, hoping to be in time to save Grenada, and brought one of his divisions to action, he kept aloof with the rest, and under cover of the night retreated with the whole; his ships which had been engaged having lost five times as many men as their English antagonists. A week or two afterwards he received a slight wound in an attack on Savannah, and returned to France.

During the same period the war in Europe was still more unproductive of striking incidents. Sartines had so raised the efficiency of the French navy that, while furnishing D'Estaing with so formidable a force in America, he was also able to equip a still finer fleet in Brest, which was placed under the command of the Count d'Orvilliers, an officer of considerable experience

and of high reputation. It consisted of thirty-two sail of the line and twelve frigates; while the force with which the British Government despatched Admiral Keppel to encounter it numbered only twenty-three sail and two frigates. While, however, D'Orvilliers was still in the harbour, Keppel captured a French frigate, from which he learnt how greatly the count's strength exceeded his or his Government's anticipation of it; and consequently he retired to Spithead, where he procured seven more sail of the line and two more frigates; with this reinforcement he returned to Brest, which D'Orvilliers had quitted a few days before; and after a short cruise, on the 23rd of July the two fleets came in sight of one another off Ushant. D'Orvilliers so far resembled D'Estaing that he had no inclination to fight on equal terms. One of his subordinate admirals was the young Duke de Chartres, who had lately been filling the saloons of Versailles with boasts of the exploits he intended to perform against the English fleet; though a great English admiral, who was residing in Paris till the time of the declaration of war, Sir George Rodney, warned him that in all probability the result of a battle would give him an opportunity of improving his acquaintance with the English language as an English prisoner. He was more anxious to hinder the fulfilment of Rodney's prophecy than to justify his own boasts, and fully coincided with the commander-in-chief in his endeavours to avoid a battle. This, though they retreated before the British with as great rapidity as was consistent with the maintenance of their ranks, was more than they were able to effect. But the action which ensued was wholly indecisive, and of a very different character from that which it would have assumed had Keppel been properly sup-

ported by his officers. For some reason which has never been adequately explained, though it probably had its origin in political differences, this was not the case; but after a sharp engagement of a couple of hours, in which a great number of the French sailors had fallen, from the English practice of directing their fire wholly at the hulls of the antagonists, while several of the English ships were severely crippled in their masts and rigging, Sir Hugh Palliser, Keppel's second in command, drew off, and disregarded all the commander-in-chief's signals to return into the line. D'Orvilliers took advantage of the respite thus afforded him to retreat, and when night came on, made off with all his fleet but three vessels, which he left behind him with lights hoisted to deceive the English admiral. As daylight returned they followed their commander-in-chief, and Keppel, though he chased them for some hours, was unable to overtake them.

The next year, as has been already mentioned, France obtained the assistance of Spain. The king, Charles III., was most unwilling to be drawn into the contest, and entertained the same opinions as the emperor on the inconsistency of monarchs supporting insurrection, which, in his case, were strengthened by the extent of his own colonial possessions in the same quarter of the globe. But Vergennes was an able diplomatist, and enlarged so skilfully on the opportunity now opened to Spain of recovering Gibraltar and Minorca, that he overcame his scruples. Charles made one effort for peace by offering his good offices as a mediator between the combatants, and England was willing to make peace on the condition of France withdrawing her assistance from the Americans, in whose quarrel she had certainly no concern. But France rejected the mediation unless England would

acknowledge the independence of her colonies. The Spanish minister next proposed a truce on the old Greek model, for twenty-five or thirty years, a proposal which the English Government of course declined, and which Vergennes knew there was no occasion to treat seriously; for the truth was that these movements of Charles and his ministers were only meant to blind the English till the Spanish armaments should be sufficiently equipped; and as soon as they were ready, in June, 1779, the Spanish ambassador in London quitted that city, leaving behind him a declaration of war.

The object of Spain was at once revealed by the forces which she instantly sent to blockade Gibraltar by land and sea, while, to prevent succour being sent to the beleaguered fortress from England, the project of invasion which had been baffled the year before was resumed with greater earnestness, or at all events with greater ostentation. The army on the coast of Normandy was greatly augmented; and in August a vast combined fleet of nearly seventy sail of the line, under D'Orvilliers and the Spanish admiral Don Luis de Cordova, swept down the British Channel with the openly proclaimed intention of clearing it of all British ships, and thus securing an unmolested passage for the transports which were to convey the troops. The plan was nearly identical with that formed by Napoleon twenty-six years later, the difference chiefly lying in the facts that on this occasion it was openly avowed, and that the admirals made no endeavour to execute it; yet they were unusually favoured in the circumstance that between Gibraltar and Dover there was no British force which seemed able to withstand them. The Channel fleet could not be raised above forty-six sail of the line, and its commander, Sir

Charles Hardy, though a brave and able seaman, was a veteran of extreme old age, from whom any great degree of boldness or enterprise could hardly be expected. But D'Orvilliers and his Spanish colleague quarrelled about their plan of operations; Don Luis wishing to transport the French army across the Channel at once, and the Frenchman, with better judgment, insisting that it was necessary first to defeat the English fleet, lest the soldiers, landed in a hostile country, should find their retreat cut off. The consequence was that they neither did nor attempted anything at all. When Hardy advanced from Spit-head to meet them they fell back to the Scilly Isles; and presently, for fear of the equinoctial gales, the season for which was approaching, D'Orvilliers returned to his own harbour, and Don Luis to Cadiz, without attempting to strike a single blow.

The next year, the continual decay of the fortunes of Britain in America did not prevent her showing that she could nevertheless make head against her European enemies by sea, though her successes were achieved principally at the cost of the Spaniards. She was fortunate in having at that time an officer on her list of admirals whose professional talents had as yet never been equalled, Sir George Rodney; and he being now appointed to the command of a fine fleet of thirty ships, including frigates, in the first month of 1780 captured or destroyed a Spanish fleet off Cape St. Vincent; relieved Gibraltar; threw a convoy of supplies into Minorca, which the French were understood to be preparing to attack; and then crossing the ocean hastened to protect the West Indian islands. They had need of his presence: France had already despatched a fleet of even greater force to the same latitudes under the Count de Guichen, who had

reached Sainte Lucie, and was blockading a British squadron in Gros Islet Bay. De Guichen was an able officer, but he was so convinced of the inferiority of his crews to British sailors that he retired to Martinique, and remained there for a month, baffling all Rodney's efforts to bring him to action. At last he was forced to quit Port Royal, and being overtaken and out-manceuvred by Rodney, found himself forced to give him battle. When he perceived that it was unavoidable he prepared for it with both bravery and skill. The English admiral had long before formed the resolution, if ever he should be commander-in-chief in a battle with a French fleet, to pierce its line, and to direct the whole weight of his attack first upon one end of it, which he expected thus to overpower before the ships at the other extremity could aid it; but now, when he tried to carry out his idea, De Guichen, penetrating his design, baffled it by able counter-manceuvres, and presently it was seen that Rodney, like Keppel two years before, had to combat not only the French fleet but a spirit of insubordination among his own officers. They disobeyed his signals; more than half the captains refused to fire a single gun; after a short action, in which both the admirals behaved with great personal gallantry, the fleets separated; and De Guichen, finding that some of his ships had been severely handled, retreated to Guadaloupe, Rodney pursuing him, and, when he reached his harbour, watching him with unwearied diligence in the hope of renewing the battle. But all his efforts failed; after a time De Guichen took advantage of his absence at Sainte Lucie to make his way to Martinique, and Rodney, on receiving intelligence of his movements, again sailed after him; but beyond a distant cannonade on

one or two occasions nothing was done. Nor though at the beginning of the summer a Spanish fleet joined De Guichen, and raised his force to double the number of Rodney's, did that great alteration of the relative strength of the antagonists produce any results. In August De Guichen returned home with his fleet; and when in 1781 a fleet finer even than that which he had commanded was sent out to the West Indies it was entrusted to the Count de Grasse, who of all the officers of the French navy had the highest reputation.

Yet that year passed off in those regions without a single transaction to mark that the two finest fleets in the world were traversing the waters in search of one another. In the course of the summer Rodney, whose health was delicate, was compelled to return to England to recruit it, leaving the command to Sir Samuel Hood, who on one occasion got near enough to De Grasse to exchange a distant cannonade with him: that kind of warfare was suited to the French armament, for though the English sailors fired with much greater rapidity, the French ships were larger, and their guns, of far heavier calibre, could do execution at a greater distance. Later in the year De Grasse had a similarly indecisive skirmish with Admiral Graves; and a smaller squadron of eight sail of the line under the Count de Barras engaged one of exactly the same size under Admiral Arbuthnot, till the combatants were parted by a thick fog. But in none of these actions was a single vessel taken on either side, and the only advantage worth speaking of gained by either side was the capture of Tobago by the ever-enterprising governor of Martinique; De Bouillé taking the command of the attacking force in person, and reducing the island before any of the English

squadrons heard of its danger. But this, which was the only success achieved by the French arms during the year, was very insufficient, even in the judgment of Vergennes himself, to balance either the vast increase which the war occasioned to the national expenditure; or the losses to the French merchants, great numbers of whose trading vessels fell into the hands of the English cruisers; or, what was of even greater importance still, the injury to the national renown which was the inevitable result of the conduct of the French admirals in persistently avoiding conflicts with fleets inferior to their own in number and power.

But the year 1782 appeared at first likely to give the war a different complexion. Towards the close of 1781 De Guichen, being appointed to the command of a fresh fleet of eighteen sail of the line, joined D'Orvilliers' old colleague, Don Luis, off Cadiz, and the combined fleets entering the Mediterranean escorted the Duke de Crillon with a combined army of four thousand French and ten thousand Spaniards to Minorca. The duke was a warrior for brilliant courage worthy of the most glorious days of the French army. Having landed without difficulty, indeed without opposition, he laid siege to St. Philip's, serving continually in the trenches in person, and heading the attacks on the different outworks. His officers expostulated with him on his fearless exposure of himself, but he replied that he must show the Spaniards not only the courage but the loyalty of their allies, and that the fact of their constituting so far the larger part of his army made it a duty for him to show by his own example that there was but one spirit in the whole force. Such a commander deserved success, and the English governor, General Murray,

had no means of doing more than retarding it. Important as the island was, especially to a naval power like Britain, from the excellence of its harbour, the events of the last war had not taught the British Government the propriety of protecting it with an adequate and efficient garrison. Even at the outset Murray had no means of resisting Crillon's disembarkation, and he was forced, as Blakeney had been, to limit his efforts to the defence of St. Philip's; soon his scanty numbers were still further reduced by sickness, and at the beginning of February he was forced to capitulate. Crillon added to the glory he had won by his courage by his generous treatment of his vanquished foes; and, after a brief delay to put the island in a proper state of defence against any attempt that might be made to recover it, crossed over to Gibraltar, where the Spaniards, in spite of their vast superiority of numbers, were contending on very unequal terms against the boundless fertility of resource, the unwearied energy, and the indomitable heroism of General Elliot.

The assistance now sent by France to her allies in the siege which they looked on as of such vital importance, and the hope of success in which had been their chief inducement to engage in the war, was not limited to that of Crillon and his victorious army. As soon as it was known that he was on his way to take the command two princes of the blood, the Count d'Artois and the Duke de Bourbon, hastened to put themselves under his orders. A few years before they had been at deadly enmity with each other; D'Artois had offered a coarse insult to the duchess, and Paris had been scandalized by the unprecedented spectacle of the king's brother and the king's cousin seeking each other's lives in a duel. They had been recon-

ciled, however, and were now eager to signalize their valour in a way more honorable to their country and to themselves; they showed, too, a desire to revive the chivalric courtesies which we have seen practised before in Spanish warfare,* D'Artois bringing with him a packet of letters for the garrison from their friends in England, and sending them in under a flag of truce, while Crillon sent fruit and game to the governor; who, however, according to a rule which he laid down for himself from the beginning of the siege, distributed the delicacies among the common soldiers. Crillon, inspiring the besiegers with his own energy, now redoubled the fire which was directed against the fortifications from their landward side, but, from the height of the ramparts, it produced but little effect, and at last it was almost abandoned, and the efforts of the besiegers were directed to maintaining a rigorous blockade, (an operation which by itself seemed not unlikely to be successful, as it was long since any fresh supplies had reached the garrison, and it was known that it was suffering the most fearful privations and distress), and to constructing floating batteries of a new description, designed by Chevalier d'Arçon, a French officer of engineers, which it was hoped when brought against the sea face of the fortress, so that it could be attacked on all sides at once, might decide the contest.† Some time, however,

* See the "Siege of Lerida," vol. ii. p. 35.

† There is some uncertainty as to who was the inventor of these floating batteries. The credit is usually attributed to the Chevalier d'Arçon, a French officer in Crillon's army; and a passage from Crillon's Memoirs, quoted by Lacretelle (Liv. xvi.), affirms that they were fabricated and employed in defiance of Crillon's judgment, the duke having formally protested against them. On the other hand, Captain Sayers, in his "History of Gibraltar" (p. 381), mentions that Crillon, in a dispute with D'Arçon, affirmed the batteries to have been *his* own invention.

was required for their construction, and before they were ready an event had occurred in the West Indies which inflicted a blow on France for which the conquest of Gibraltar, could it have been achieved, would have been no compensation to her.

In that region also the campaign had begun favorably for the French arms. De Grasse, profiting by Rodney's absence, and the inferiority of the force under Hood, captured St. Christopher's, Nevis, and Montserrat; while another enterprising officer, the Count de Kersaint, recovered Demerara and Essequibo; and De Bouillé, whose advice had greatly contributed to these successes, was beginning to entertain hopes of stripping England of all her West Indian possessions, when towards the end of February Rodney returned with a well-appointed reinforcement, and reassumed the command of a fleet exactly equal to that which he came to encounter. De Grasse was in Port Royal Bay, waiting for a favorable opportunity of joining a Spanish squadron which was lying at San Domingo, and with the aid of which he entertained no doubt of making himself master of Jamaica, the most valuable of all the colonies of England in those quarters. Rodney had gone to Sainte Lucie for supplies, leaving Hood off Port Royal to watch his movements, and he, not having as accurate intelligence as the British commander had taken care to be supplied with, thought the sea open, and on the 8th of April set sail for San Domingo. A chain of frigates skilfully posted between Hood's station and Sainte Lucie instantly gave notice to the British commander-in-chief that his enemy was at sea; as instantly he rejoined his fleet and pursued; overtook De Grasse off Dominica, and after a day or two had been spent in manœuvring, at last succeeded in gaining the weather-gage

of the French fleet, and, with it, the power of bringing his enemy to instant action. The wind had shifted and fallen away altogether so often within the last few days that he would not trust it for a moment; but on the 12th of April, the moment that there was sufficient daylight to allow his signals to be seen, he bore down to the attack. A long and stubborn battle ensued. Since the battle of Malaga no fleets of equal magnitude had met in fight. Rodney had thirty-six sail of the line, De Grasse thirty-four; but he was full of confidence, since his ships were larger on an average than the English vessels, and since, besides their regular crews, he had several regiments of soldiers on board destined for the attack of Jamaica, but, in the event of any attempt being made by either side to board, calculated to be of the greatest service in the impending battle.* He therefore was as willing to fight as his antagonist; his flag-ship, the *Ville de Paris*, was far larger than any ship in the English fleet; was, indeed, in the not too partial opinion of the French officers, the finest ship in the world, and he bore down with her among his enemies as if he thought her fire alone sufficient to decide the victory. But Rodney had at last found the opportunity of executing the manœuvre which he had so long meditated. At first

* "Comte de Grasse, who is at this moment sitting in my stern gallery, tells me that he thought his fleet superior to mine: and does so still, though I had two more in number. And I am of his opinion; as his was composed all of large ships, and two of mine only seventy-fours" (Letter of Rodney to his wife, "*Life of Rodney*," ii. 252). The way in which the French historians treat this victory of Rodney's, and the other occurrences of the naval war in the Atlantic, affords a singular specimen of the degree in which they are compelled to humour the national vanity, and of the difficulties which any foreign writer would find in drawing up a correct account of those occurrences from the very best French narrative. Lacroix, after claiming the result of the action between De Grasse and

the two fleets cannonaded one another, each in one unbroken line, but after some time the French array became disordered, and Rodney perceived a slight opening near the centre. For it he at once caused his own ship, the *Formidable*, to be steered, signalling to his centre division to follow him. The French line was broken; Rodney, as soon as he had passed through it, wore* the *Formidable*, and ordered the other ships to follow his example. One whole division of the French fleet was thus placed between two fires; and though the captains fought not only with fiery courage but with stubborn resolution, they could not long maintain the contest against such odds, and Rodney's manœuvre justified his confidence by proving decisive of a complete victory. Seven sail of the line, and among them the *Ville de Paris* with De Grasse himself on board, were taken, one was sunk, a frigate and a sloop were brought in a day or two afterwards, while the chief part of the land force intended to act against Jamaica, all the artillery and ammunition, and a vast sum of money to pay the troops, was found in the ships which had surrendered.

No disaster which the French arms had ever

Admiral Graves as a victory, and stating that Graves was forced to burn one of his ships, and that two of his frigates were captured, which is wholly untrue [the fact being, that, after a drawn battle, De Grasse declined to renew the action, and as Graves would not retreat, retreated himself into the *Chesapeake*], disparages Rodney's great triumph, as having led to no subsequent conquest, or even enterprise on the part of the English, and as deriving its chief importance from its effect on opinion in France, and as, if not effacing, at least obscuring the honour which the French had gained by ten drawn battles; while Amedée Renée says still less about it, on the plea that "il en coûterait trop à un Français de donner le détail de cette bataille. Il faudrait trop louer le génie de l'homme qui fit un si grand mal à la patrie."

* In naval language, to wear a ship is to bring the wind on her other side, by turning her head *away from* it. To tack, is to effect the same object, by turning her head *towards* the wind.

experienced had made a more profound impression on all classes of the people, and all expressed their willingness to contribute to the utmost to its retrieval. Addresses to the king poured in from all quarters ; every public body and many individuals offering extraordinary contributions to enable him to re-establish his fleet on its former footing, and, indeed, greatly to augment it. The city of Paris offered him a ship of 110 guns, to replace the *Ville de Paris* ; every province offered him a ship of the line. The receivers-general, the farmers of the taxes, the companies of merchants and guilds of trade, the household troops, all came forward, offering either ships or vast subscriptions in money.* But Louis, though these offers were especially grateful to him, since he took more interest in and was better acquainted with naval affairs than with those of any other department, with one or two exceptions, declined the assistance thus proffered to him ; thinking, justly, that the national loss ought to fall on the national purse, and not on those whose greater patriotism and willingness to contribute did not necessarily prove their greater ability to do so.

The capture of Gibraltar would hardly have made amends for such a blow ; but the defeat of D'Arçon's batteries when they were completed was as signal as that of De Grasse's more regular fleet. The second week of September had arrived before they were ready, and even then they were somewhat hurried at the last moment, in consequence of intelligence having reached Crillon that a fleet under Lord Howe was on its way to victual and reinforce the fortress. They were most

* See his letter to M. Amelot, June 3, 1782, Collection of M. Feuillet de Conches, i. 135.

formidable engines of attack ; ten huge single-decked vessels bomb-proof at the top, with sides upwards of six feet thick composed of the stoutest beams, and covered with raw hides soaked in water ; their offensive armament consisted of above 140 guns and mortars of the largest calibre then known ; and on the 13th of September, the day fixed for the grand attack, they were supported by a combined French and Spanish fleet of thirty-nine sail of the line, which took up their positions the night before ; by a countless mass of smaller vessels, gun-boats, mortar-boats, and other craft of light draught of water ; and, on the landward side by the renewed fire of all the batteries about St. Roque. General Elliot, however, had not been idle ; although his entire garrison did not exceed seven thousand men, and the whole number of his guns, of all calibres, fell short of a hundred, he made up for his deficiency of force by his completeness of arrangement. Each man had his post carefully assigned to him beforehand, and at the suggestion of an engineer officer, General Boyd, furnaces had been erected at different points to heat the shot red hot, in the hope that by this expedient the ordinary ships of war might be kept at a distance, even if the shot could not penetrate D'Arçon's batteries. Even this had General Boyd believed that they would effect ; and the result proved that his calculations were sounder than D'Arçon's, who, when he boasted that his batteries were fire-proof, had never conceived the possibility of such missiles being employed against them. At daybreak on the 13th the attack commenced, and never in the history of war had such a fire been directed upon a single spot as floating batteries, land batteries, gun-boats, mortar-boats, and huge ships of the line, from a distance of little more

than a quarter of a mile, now poured hour after hour on the narrow surface of the Gibraltar ramparts. Elliot was equally active, but his guns did not equal one-tenth of those brought against him; while for many hours the heated balls seemed to produce no greater effect than ordinary shot. D'Arçon's batteries appeared as great in resisting power as he had predicted they would prove. Shells which fell on their decks exploded harmlessly, and the hides seemed to quench the round shot. But after six hours of ceaseless attack and reply the face of affairs altered. One or two of the batteries, and among them the largest, which had D'Arçon himself on board, began to relax its fire, while smoke was seen to rise from the deck. Some of Boyd's red-hot shot had pierced the hides, and burying themselves in the timbers behind had kindled a conflagration. Elliot's fire never slackened, and presently others were seen to be in the same predicament. Before night they were all in flames, and the contest was over. The crews of the burning vessels leaped overboard in their despair to save themselves from sharing the fate of their vessels, and the English garrison desisted from their cannonade to save their drowning enemies. Still, however, Crillon maintained the blockade, hoping that famine might subdue the garrison on whom no French or Spanish arms could make an impression. But even that hope was soon wrested from him; on the day four weeks after the defeat of the great attack a British fleet under Lord Howe, escorting a large flotilla of store ships, was seen approaching; and there were no means of preventing the supplies from reaching the garrison, for the very night before a violent storm had fallen on De Guichen's fleet, driving many of the ships into the Mediterranean, wrecking some on the rugged African

coast, and leaving the whole strait open. Howe, as Crillon had learnt beforehand, was the admiral in command of the British fleet; he landed his supplies, and a body of troops which he had brought with him as a reinforcement for the garrison, and then marshalled his fleet in line of battle, expecting to be attacked by the combined French and Spanish fleet as soon as it had reunited, since, in spite of the injuries which it had suffered from the storm, it was still far stronger than his own. But now that all hope of subduing the great fortress for which they had made such exertions was gone, they were not inclined to fight for the mere sake of fighting; and though they had forty-two ships of the line fit for action, many of which were larger than any single vessel in the British fleet, they after a day or two retired into Cadiz, and the attack on Gibraltar was the last operation of the war.

The enterprises of the French fleet, however, had not been confined to the Atlantic. Vergennes had a very skilful spy in London, a man of the name of De la Mothe, from whom, at the beginning of 1781, he learnt that the British Government was preparing to despatch a small squadron to attack the Dutch settlement at the Cape of Good Hope. A somewhat stronger squadron was instantly equipped at Brest to defeat the enterprise, and was placed under the command of Admiral Suffrein, who, besides his rank in the French navy, could boast of a remarkable tribute which had been paid to his honourable and gallant character by the knights of Malta, who had elected him their bailli. He soon showed that he was of a far more enterprising disposition than his brother officers with their larger fleets. In April he overtook the British commodore at the Cape de Verd Islands, and

though, as belonging to Portugal, those islands were neutral ground, he instantly attacked him. Probably it was his superiority in strength which induced him thus to disregard the rights of neutrality, for he had five sail of the line and several smaller vessels, while Commodore Johnstone had but two line-of-battle ships, and three fifty-gun ships; but he was disappointed of the victory on which he had reckoned, for Johnstone raised the British force to an equality with his by taking some armed merchantmen into his line, and beat him off, one of the French ships, the Hannibal, being far more injured than any of her antagonists. Suffrein, however, though forced to retreat, gained the object with which he was originally sent out: he outstripped Johnstone, reaching the Cape in sufficient time to make it impossible for the British commander to attack it; and then hastened on to India, in the hope of checking the progress making by England, whose interests in that country were, fortunately for her, at this time confided to the greatest man then numbered among her sons, Warren Hastings.

The first outbreak of war between the two countries had been followed instantaneously by an admirable display of the British governor's energetic decision, and by corresponding losses on the part of the French. The news of the declaration of war reached Hastings on the 7th July, 1770. The very same day he issued orders for an immediate attack on the French settlements in the south. On the 10th, Chandernagore was taken; Pondicherry was invested, and after a stubborn resistance, which did honour to the gallantry of its governor, M. Bellecourbe, was forced to surrender in October. At the beginning of 1779, Mahé, on the Malabar coast, was also reduced. France was stripped of her last settlement in those regions, and for some

little time seemed in doubt whether she should make any effort to recover them. But the Dutch, who had been drawn into the war with England by French influence, had their eastern possessions also wrested from them. The English had taken Negapatam, Trincomalee, and were threatening their establishments in Sumatra; and their Government consequently made such strong representations at Paris of the obligations under which the king's Government lay to support them, and of the impolicy of allowing the English to become uncontrolled masters of the east, that Suffrein was ordered, after relieving the Cape, to proceed to India, and make one more effort to retrieve his country's fortunes in that country; and he was furnished with a couple of regiments as a reinforcement to the French troops still in India, who, though having no longer a single town left to them, were co-operating with Hyder Ali, the resolute enemy of the English name. The English admiral on that station was Sir Edward Hughes, who had under his command eight sail of the line, a fifty-gun ship, and a frigate. Suffrein had been joined by another squadron at the Isle of France, so that he was able to lead to the Indian waters a force stronger than that of the English by two sail of the line and three frigates. He found Sir Edward in the roads of Madras, too strongly posted for him to attack; he fell back, and the British commander pursued, attacked, and defeated him, taking five or six transports, one of which had 300 men and a large quantity of military stores on board. But though thus worsted, Suffrein was not dismayed. Four times in the course of the next twelve months did he renew the contest; and it is remarkable that, though Hughes subsequently received reinforcements which raised him to an equality in

point of force with his antagonist, he never afterwards was able to obtain any decisive advantage over him. He on every occasion, indeed, compelled him to retreat with a loss of men greater than his own; but though in professional skill the English commander thus showed a slight superiority, in general energy and readiness he was inferior to Suffrein, who, after one action, fell back on the mainland, and in conjunction with Hyder's son Tippoo, captured Cuddalore, and after another dropped down to Ceylon and recovered Trincomalee. They were preparing for another battle which each hoped to render more decisive when news reached them that their countries were again at peace. As early as the spring of 1782 the English Government had been compelled to renounce the endeavour to subdue the Americans;* and, though the negotiations were delayed by the untimely and unexpected death of Lord Rockingham, the English prime minister, a provisional treaty between Britain and the United States was signed at Paris in November. But though France had originally taken up arms only as an ally of the Americans, and therefore this event had removed the original cause of war between the two countries, she had since encumbered herself with another ally whose pretensions, since they were mainly founded on her own promises, she could not gracefully disown, while it was certain that she could never enforce them. She had lured Spain into the contest chiefly by the prospect of recovering Gibraltar. Minorca indeed had been mentioned, and

* General Conway's Resolution against any further attempt being made to conquer them was carried February 27; his address to the king, having the same object, on the 4th of March; and Lord North resigned on the 20th.

Minorca had been reconquered, but all hope of wresting Gibraltar from its English garrison was further removed than ever. The English ministers absolutely refused to cede it for any compensation; and for a moment the Spaniards spoke as if they would prefer a continuance of the war to a peace which should leave the great Spanish fortress in foreign hands. But Vergennes was a diplomatist of great ability: he prevailed on them to lower their pretensions to what was attainable; England consented to cede the Floridas, and to renounce all claim to Minorca; and with these acquisitions Spain was at last satisfied, and withdrew her objections to the contemplated treaty. Between France and England the chief conditions involved a mutual restitution of the conquests of each. France restored the West Indian Islands, which De Bouillé, De Guichen, and others had recently taken from England; and received back from England Ste. Lucie and her Indian settlements, with the gratuitous addition of Tobago, which was of great value, and of the district around the Senegal river in Africa, which was of very little importance; while the national honour or the national pride was further gratified by the abrogation of that article of the Treaty of Utrecht which provided for the destruction of Dunkirk. On these terms Peace was signed in January, 1763; and France was left at leisure once more to turn her attention to plans of internal reform.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

EVEN if Necker had still been the director of the finances, he would have found himself at a great disadvantage if the state of affairs in 1783 had been compared with that in 1778. The war had not only cost enormous sums of ready money during its continuance; but, in spite of the addition which had been made to the taxes to provide those sums, it had doubled the annual deficit, and had added a floating debt of 220 millions of livres, to meet which there were neither funds nor expedients. Nor was it much less dangerous to the State than even the worst of its financial embarrassments that the troops which had been employed in America had brought back with them a republican spirit, and a leaning to forms of government such as they had aided to establish in that country, which was calculated to prove a serious embarrassment to any statesman who might seek to introduce constitutional reforms on the basis of the maintenance of a full measure of the king's authority.

But Necker was no longer a member of the ministry. His establishment of the provincial assemblies had been unpopular in other quarters besides the Parliament. He upheld them resolutely, not fearing to try his strength on the subject with Maurepas himself; and when Sartines, the minister of marine, not only denounced them, but tried to create a preju-

dice against both them and him by representing him as inspired by only English feelings,* he had insisted on his dismissal, and had procured the nomination of a partisan of his own, the Marquis de Castries, in his stead, and that of Marshal de Ségur to the department of war. Still the opposition, though thus overborne for a moment, was not altogether without influence. All who on any ground were unfriendly to Necker were naturally encouraged by finding that they could count on the goodwill of the prime minister, who had made no secret of his repugnance to the admission of De Castries and Ségur into the Government; nor, consequently, of his annoyance with Necker, who had forced them on him. And these feelings were stimulated by a new measure of the finance minister for which there was no precedent in French history.

Necker's object in establishing his provincial assemblies had been to create a body on whose aid he might rely in his meditated abolition of the exemptions claimed by the privileged classes, the one measure without which any attempt to equalize the revenue with the expenditure must be futile. And the transactions of the two that he had already convened, as we have seen, had justified his expectations. The assemblies of Berri and Upper Guienne having at once put all classes in those provinces on an equal footing in respect of taxation, he conceived the idea that the other assemblies would be more easily encouraged to follow their example if he made it plain to the whole

* There was no insinuation calculated to produce greater influence on the king's mind, till his misfortunes drove him to entertain different views. He had hardly any feeling so strong as his dislike of England. In a letter to the King and Queen of Spain, June 19, 1778 (Vol. i. p. 110, of the collection published by M. Feuillet de Conches), he speaks with great bitterness of this country as "*l'ennemie naturelle et la rivale de notre maison.*"

nation how indispensable a great increase of the revenue really was: since it would be evident that the greater portion of such increase as could not be provided by the abolition of exemptions, must be furnished by an augmentation of the burdens of the general body of the people. He therefore obtained from Louis permission to publish to the world the statement of the financial position* of the kingdom, which he had already laid before the king himself; and at the end of 1780 he issued it. Many of its statements were afterwards contested, and the inaccuracy of some was undoubtedly proved. But, before there was time for any investigation of its details, the policy as well as the motive of the publication were impeached in many quarters. The courtiers complained that it was a decisive blow to the authority of the king, and a formal condemnation of the customs and principles of the ancient monarchy. Necker's personal enemies objected that it was an act of mere vanity, prompted chiefly by a desire to proclaim himself to all the world as the one all-important person in the Government, an imputation not wholly inconsistent with his character. A more solid objection is, that it was a blind adoption of an English practice, when the entire circumstances of the case bore no resemblance or analogy to English modes of proceeding. In England it was the custom yearly to submit to Parliament, and through Parliament to the nation at large, an accurate statement of the finances, because Parliament alone had the power to regulate them both in the raising of money and in the expenditure. But in France as yet there was in existence no one body invested with the authority to sanction an amount or

* Known in the French histories as *Le Compte-rendu*.

mode of taxation for the whole kingdom, nor had it probably been contemplated by any one to make any assembly that should be convoked masters of the expenditure. Englishmen, with the practical working of their own constitution before their eyes, can see that the one power must have drawn after it the other ; that from the moment when the minister had to seek the sanction of any public assembly for either the amount of taxes which he might wish to raise, or for the mode of their assessment, he had practically given it also the power of regulating their expenditure. But as yet even Necker did not see this ; nor was any such general assembly in existence. To publish, therefore, a financial statement to the nation when it contained no representative or legislative body authorized to interfere in the matter, or even to investigate it, was to appeal to those who had no authority to examine the appeal nor any recognised means of entertaining it.

That it was a most adroit statement, drawn with consummate art to convince all who did not examine into every minute detail contained in it and to bewilder those who did, especially as it was hardly possible for any one but the framer to be in a position to supply its omissions, is most certain. And those who believed it, we should rather say, perhaps, who took its accuracy for granted, could not refuse their homage to the author as the most successful financier on record. The prodigious embarrassments, the almost bankrupt state of the national treasury when he first took office, was denied by no one. He had been minister but four years ; yet now, according to this statement, the annual deficit was extinguished, the balance was even transferred to the other side, and there was an annual surplus of ten millions. Though enormous

loans (he subsequently affirmed them to amount to 530 millions) had been raised, no new taxes had been imposed; some had even been wholly remitted, many had been diminished: and all these marvels had been accomplished merely by an improved administration of the resources which the minister had found already in existence; by economy of management; by savings which injured no one, and which, though of trifling amount in each case, were almost infinite in number; by the suppression of admitted abuses, the prevention of frauds; and, as he boasted with peculiar self-gratification, above all by the improvement of public credit, which had been the consequence of the frankness which he himself had from the first introduced into the management of his department.

Perhaps he boasted a little too much of his extreme frankness. At a subsequent period it was proved to demonstration that the surplus which he vaunted so loudly had no existence whatever; but that to enable him to put it forward he had included in his estimate of the expenditure only the regular charges on the revenue, and had omitted all notice of the extraordinary charges, which in spite of their name were in reality as regular as the others; which in the previous reign had sometimes almost equalled them in amount; and which still amounted to an enormous yearly sum. For, though the expenditure of the court for objects of luxury was now reduced to as small an amount as was compatible with the proper hospitality and necessary liberality of royalty, and though that still greater drain on the treasury which had been caused by the vices of preceding sovereigns was wholly cut off, yet the facile good-nature of the present king, which led him to grant every petition which was presented to him,

however costly or unreasonable might be the favour which it asked, burdened the revenue to as great an extent as the vicious prodigality of the worst of his predecessors.* But at the time, even those who

* "Le roi, quoiqu'il n'eût point de luxe pour lui-même, était d'une telle bonté qu'il ne savait rien refuser à ceux qui l'entouraient; et les grâces de tout genre excédaient sous son règne, quelque austère que fut sa conduite, les dépenses mêmes de Louis XV."—De Staël: "Consid. sur la Rév. Franç.," i. 72. The Marquis de Bouillé makes a similar statement: "Ce fut pour plaire à ce public que l'on vida le trésor royal, et que l'on repandit les richesses de l'État sur la foule affamée qui composait et qui environnait la cour," p. 19. Madame de Staël throughout her work is pleading her father's cause, by dwelling on his difficulties, and apparently does not perceive that, as these "grâces" were wholly omitted from the *Compte-rendu*, the greater their amount was, the more did their omission render that statement (as Necker's successors alleged) wholly fallacious.

In his "Essay on the Administration of the Finances," published during Calonne's administration (quoted by Lacretelle, vi. 110), Necker gives the following summary of the state of the whole kingdom:—

The population was 24,676,000—916 souls to each square league. The gross taxation of every kind 584,400,000 livres—or 23 livres, 13 sous, 8 deniers (a denier was the 12th of a sous) for every head of the population.

The expenses of the State he sums up thus:—

	Livres.
Interest of the public debt	207,000,000
Reimbursements	27,500,000
Pensions	28,000,000
Portion of the expenses of the war [ended in 1783] ...	105,600,000
Expenses of the marine	45,200,000
Foreign affairs	85,000,000
Household of the king	13,000,000
Expenses of the precincts	200,000
Buildings	3,200,000
Royal mansions	1,500,000
Household of the queen	4,000,000
The royal family	3,500,000
The king's brothers	8,300,000
Expenses of collection	58,000,000
Bridges, causeways, &c.	8,000,000
Secretaries of state, officials, &c.	4,000,000
Intendants of provinces	1,400,000
Police... ..	2,100,000
Pavement of Paris	900,000

denied the policy or even the propriety of publishing the statement, entertained no suspicion of its correctness; and the general belief in its accuracy won for

Expenses of justice	2,400,000
The Marshalsea	4,000,000
Depôts of Mendicity... ..	1,200,000
Prisons, &c.	400,000
Gifts and alms	1,800,000
Ecclesiastical expenses	1,600,000
Expenses of Royal treasury, different banks, &c. ...	2,000,000
Different establishments	400,000
Encouragement of commerce	800,000
Breeding horses	800,000
Universities, colleges, &c.	600,000
Academies	300,000
King's library	100,000
King's garden	72,000
Printing-offices	200,000
Building and maintenance of palace of justice ...	800,000
Intendant of post and secret expenses	450,000
Other postal expenses	600,000
Permits and passports	800,000
Order of St. Esprit	600,000
Expenses in the provinces	6,500,000
Isle of Corsica	800,000
Sundries	1,500,000
Special expenses of the Clergy of France	750,000
Item of foreign Clergy	50,000
Special expenses on the Pays d'Etat	1,500,000
Maintenance of and construction of roads	20,000,000
Towns, hospitals, chambers of commerce, &c. ...	26,000,000
Unforeseen expenses	3,000,000
	<hr/>
	609,922,000
Or, in round numbers	610,000,000

This, therefore, shows a deficit on the *gross* receipts of 26,000,000; and if, as must be done, the expenses of collection (58,000,000) are deducted, of 84,000,000, the whole amount allowed for sundries and unforeseen expenses is only 4,500,000, a sum manifestly too small. And whatever addition should be made to that amount, is so much addition to the yearly deficit. The author of the sketch of Calonne in the "Biographie Universelle" calls the revenue *at most* 475,000,000; the expenditure at least 590,000,000. It may be remarked that the expenses for the queen and royal family are less than those for the king's two brothers.

the financier who had established such a degree of prosperity warm panegyrics from foreign statesmen ; even from those of such extensive experience, vast learning, and sound statesmanlike philosophy as Edmund Burke : it also raised the credit of the country among the least confiding of all bodies, the foreign capitalists, so greatly, that he was able at the end of the year to raise a new loan of 200 millions on easier terms than ever. And this operation, which was undeniably the result of the publication of the financial statement, so increased his confidence in his own abilities and in the soundness of his system, that he no longer concealed his disdain for his enemies and assailants. Yet they were day by day getting more formidable. In his suppression of sinecures and superfluous offices he did not spare the royal households. One single edict abolished no fewer than four hundred offices in the households of the king and queen themselves ; even the grand mastership of the king's household not being spared, though it was held by one of the blood royal, the Prince de Condé. If the princes were thus dealt with, it may easily be supposed that still less consideration was shown for the nobles and courtiers. All united against the audacious reformer, and the Count d'Artois put forward M. Bourboulín, the controller of his household, to write a pamphlet severely criticising the minister's statement. It was, however, so bungling a performance that Necker had no difficulty in proving the correctness of his own assertions on the point which the writer had selected for controversy : and, skilfully availing himself of his critic's blunders, he summoned a meeting of the Council of State, the members of which, even Maurepas, Miromesnil, and Vergennes,

admitted his correctness in the articles in which M. Bourboulin had challenged it.

A crafty disputant can often make the refutation of an attack on one subject bear the appearance of a general victory ; and Necker, assuming that his establishment of the correctness of his statement in the particulars on which it had been assailed was a demonstration of the whole, now demanded that the whole nation should be assured of his victory, and of the king's entire confidence in him, by his admission into the council, in which, as we have seen, he had hitherto had no place. He had already, though the act was suspected by none of his colleagues, nor in all probability by the king himself, so far taken on himself the character of a member of the council as to make secret overtures to the British prime minister, Lord North, with a view to the restoration of peace, by a letter in which he not only expressed a general wish to bring it about, and a conviction of the sufficiency of his own influence with the king's Government,* but ventured even to suggest to the British minister one concession on his part to smooth the way, namely, the withdrawal of the condition forbidding any restoration of Dunkirk, which, as we have seen, did actually form one of the articles of the treaty that was eventually concluded. Perhaps this exercise of his diplomatic talents, though unauthorised, may have given an additional edge to his wish for a promotion which

* See the letter itself in the Appendix to Lord Mahon's seventh volume. In it, though in terms disavowing the character of a *Ministre de la Politique*, he nevertheless speaks as if he had the power of securing the assent of his superior colleagues, and as if peace depended, in France, chiefly on himself. "Vous désirez la paix. Je la désire aussi. Je crois pouvoir vous assurer que des overtures raisonnables réussiraient tout aussi bien dans mes mains que dans celles de tout autre," &c. The letter is dated Dec. 1, 1780.

would remove the limitation of his exertions to matters of finance which at present seemed to be implied by his exclusion from the council, and would give him a voice in the more dignified if not weightier matters of foreign policy. But the result of his demand showed him that he had overrated his influence with his colleagues and the king. It was at once refused, with the intimation that it would be granted if he would renounce his religion and become a Catholic. There can be little doubt that the intimation was meant as a personal insult; that Maurepas, who by this time had become extremely unfriendly to him, was convinced of the fixedness of his religious principles; and, being resolved that he should not be admitted into the council, only advanced his Calvinism as a reason because he knew it to be an unalterable one. As a personal insult Necker himself regarded it; and at once resigned his office, on the ground that what he had requested he had desired only as being such a mark of the king's confidence as would enable him to carry his measures, and that as it was withheld he could no longer usefully continue in his service.

The excitement produced by his resignation was so great as to show that the belief in his own importance to the ministry which he had expressed to Lord North was largely shared by others. To the commons of the kingdom, to the agricultural, manufacturing, and trading classes he was the whole Government. His resignation was to them the overthrow of their hopes, not so much of a political regeneration, for which as yet few but a small band of speculative writers cared, but of the maintenance of the system under which their pecuniary and mercantile interests were flourishing. The citizens in general caught the infection. In the public gardens and coffee-houses

every one was grave and silent, as on the occasion of some heavy and general calamity. At the theatre, which no anxiety could prevent the people from attending, it happened that the play on the evening of his resignation related to the reign of Henry IV., and every sentence of compliment to Sully was so pointedly and enthusiastically applied to Necker by the tumultuous applause of the audience, that the actors were summoned before the police, and forced to justify themselves for such a performance on such a day by the proof that it had been announced a week before.* As at first he only retired to St. Ouen, a country-house which he possessed about five miles from the city, it became at once the place of universal resort. The Parisians of all classes, not only merchants and men of business, but courtiers, fine ladies, and even princes of royal blood, thronging thither to pay him their respects. Condé himself, though so lately deprived by him of his court employment, enrolled himself among his admirers, as did many of the chief ecclesiastics, in spite of his attacks on their privileges. Even those still nearer to the king showed their sympathy with the public feeling. The Princess Louise wrote to assure him of her concern; and the queen herself condescended in a personal interview to beg him to recall his resignation, urging upon him that Maurepas, whose strength was visibly decaying, could not long remain in office, and that his retirement must inevitably render him entire master of the Government;† and, in her honest earnestness for what she believed to be for the welfare of her people, wept when he withdrew without having yielded to her

* Correspondence of Baron Grimm, v. 297.

† Madame de Campan, c. x.

solicitations. It was late in the evening and dark when he took his leave of her ; and afterwards, when he was told that he had drawn tears from her eyes by his refusal, he said that he had not known it before ; that had he seen them he should have submitted to her wish so enforced, even at the sacrifice of his own reputation and happiness. And, if this expression was a burst of chivalrous deference to Marie Antoinette's sex and dignity, not quite in keeping with the usual character of the speaker, it is yet not unlikely that the universality of the regret which was elicited by his resignation may have led him to doubt whether the step which he had taken was wise, or whether the public opinion in his favour was not both sufficiently wide-spread and sufficiently influential to have supported him, and to have enabled him to carry his measures in spite of his enemies and detractors. In truth, the regret of the people at his resignation was neither unnatural nor undeserved. Even though his boasts of what he had effected were not wholly justified by the facts, and though his financial statement could not stand a rigorous and unfriendly scrutiny, it was, nevertheless, beyond a doubt that he had done the State very great service during his period of office. It was certain that he had averted the necessity for a national bankruptcy, which but a short time before had appeared so imminent that Turgot had declared that, unless the expenditure could be brought within the receipts, the first cannon shot fired in Europe must render it inevitable ; that he had greatly lightened the national debt by the payment of arrears ; that he had diminished the future drain on the treasury by the abolition of thousands of useless offices, and by an improved organization of all that were left ; that at the same time

he had stimulated every kind of industry, agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial, so as greatly to augment the power of those who exercised it, and through them that of the whole kingdom, to bear the burden of the existing, or, if need should arise, even of additional taxation ; that he had very greatly raised the public credit ; and that, by procuring the abolition of exemptions from taxation in two provinces, he had paved the way for extinguishing them throughout the kingdom. And of all the measures which had been planned with a view to the extrication of the kingdom from its financial embarrassments, this was not only by far the most efficacious, but that without which all others must be futile. To have done all this in so brief a period was a great achievement, and perhaps Necker regretted still more that by his renunciation of his post he had left his system incomplete when, before the end of the year, Maurepas died, and it seemed probable that he himself, if he had still retained office, might have become prime minister, and might have succeeded to all the authority of Colbert or Sully. Yet though, when the character and conduct of his successors are considered, it cannot be doubted that in many respects his resignation was disastrous to his adopted country, it is also probable that it would have been favorable to his own reputation with posterity, provided at least that he had never been recalled to office, and recalled to be invested with far greater power than he had previously enjoyed ; for as a legislative and constitutional reformer he entirely failed, and his failure must be attributed not so much to the difficulties of his task, vast as they undoubtedly were, and in any case must have been ; and greatly as they had been augmented by the mismanagement of those who presided over his depart-

ment in the interval between his abandonment and his resumption of it ; as to the defects of his own character, some of which have been already mentioned, while others were more fully developed by the calls which the march of events made on his practical wisdom, as it will be our task to narrate in a subsequent chapter.

In another way the fall of Necker was mischievous to the country from the impression which it diffused of the incurable weakness of purpose in the king. Louis had deserted Turgot in spite of his repeated promises to support him, and in spite, as was supposed, of the violence which by that desertion of him he did to his own convictions of that minister's wisdom ; and the general belief was that he had an equally high opinion of Necker's probity and sagacity, and of the value of the services which he was rendering to the nation, and that he was now abandoning him likewise from a want of courage to resist the clamours of his enemies. Those, however, who thought thus were probably mistaking the feelings by which in this case he was influenced, and were attributing to his want of firmness conduct which had a very different source in his constant jealousy of England. Louis had a deep-rooted antipathy to English principles. Every time that Necker quoted the example of that country, and professed his adherence to the maxims of English statesmen, he was unconsciously alienating his master, and leading him to look with disfavour on the very measures which, if he himself had advocated them on different grounds, the king would in all likelihood have cordially supported. To this personal feeling of Louis another was added which was secretly inspired by Vergennes, who, being aware that Maurepas was sinking into the grave under an in-

curable disease, and desiring to succeed to his authority, wished to get rid of a colleague who engrossed the principal share of the public attention, and persuaded the king that he also was thrown into the shade by the importance attached by the public to all Necker's plans and operations, and that he was imperceptibly giving himself a master. It is with weak men that such arguments are most powerful; and to this also in some degree we may ascribe the king's abandonment of a servant who certainly never intentionally failed in fidelity to his interests.

It was not, however, easy at once to replace him. Turgot had died two months before. Of those who had any acquaintance whatever with financial subjects, and whose characters rendered their appointment admissible, the number was very small. And as Maurepas, whose disease was cancer, gradually became more and more incapable of attending to business, Vergennes, whose influence over the king was rising every day, persuaded Louis to give him the nominal appointment of comptroller-general, with Joly de Fleury under him to take the real management. The arrangement suited Louis, who often praised the intention expressed by Louis XIV. to be his own minister, and who was disinclined to give any one after Maurepas the title of prime minister. But Joly de Fleury himself was with difficulty persuaded to agree to it, and his reluctance was only overcome by the assurance given him of the support of the Parliament of Paris in all his operations. Finance he had never studied, and soon showed himself incapable of understanding. In one respect he took office under most advantageous circumstances, since Necker had left the treasury replenished with a larger sum of ready money and available resources than it had contained before in the memory of man; but

his own incapacity was so great, that in a very few months he had not only dissipated the fruits of his predecessor's economy and good management, but had again plunged the State in debt to an amount that compelled him to increase the burdens of the people, and to restore the property-tax to the amount of fifteen per cent., at which Necker had found it, but from which he had long since reduced it. Such a measure did not fail to awaken great discontent; but as he craftily accompanied it by a withdrawal of the ordinance under which the assemblies of Berri and Upper Guienne had been convoked, the Parliament of Paris, acting in a spirit of compromise after their own fashion, cheerfully overlooked the oppression of the people in general, in consideration of the service done to their own dignity by the suppression of bodies which threatened to be formidable rivals, and registered his financial edicts without a murmur of resistance. One or two provincial Parliaments, that of Besançon is especially mentioned, showed a less selfish or a more patriotic spirit, appending to its registration a rider affirming that the augmentation of the tax was only to be in force during the continuance of the war. But this attempt to assert their independence, however modified, was severely checked. Louis, now acting wholly under the advice of Vergennes, who to decision and resolution added a clear perception both of his objects and of the means requisite for their attainment, summoned deputations of the different refractory Parliaments to Versailles, and with severe reproaches compelled them in his presence to cancel the obnoxious paragraphs; and the edicts, as they finally appeared in the parliamentary records, were thus adopted without reservation. Vergennes was ambitious as well as resolute. He carried his

views beyond the enforcement of a momentary obedience to the prevention of similar insubordination; and with this object he persuaded the king to introduce into his reproof a sentence in which he laid down the rule that the councillors were to consider "everything done in his name as done by his express order," a maxim of most pernicious tendency, especially at such a moment, since, though the doctrine of kingly irresponsibility and ministerial responsibility was in theory unknown in France, nevertheless in practice it was often recognised. Even under Louis XIV., Colbert and Louvois had reaped the credit, or borne the odium, of many of the chief measures of the Government; but Louis was now made to appropriate to himself alone all the discredit which must arise from the disorder into which the finances were already relapsing; all the dissatisfaction which would be caused by any disasters of war, or any shortcomings in the negotiations for peace; all the ill-will which the privileged classes would feel against the authority which should finally abolish their exemptions; all the anger of the people at any resistance which might be made to the improvement of their political condition which many were demanding for them, and which, as many tokens indicated, they were likely soon to claim loudly for themselves.

It must be admitted that Vergennes had no intention that the words he thus put into his royal master's mouth should have such an effect. In his view they were only a dignified assertion of the absolute authority of the crown, with which he himself was too deeply impressed to imagine the possibility of any discontent or resistance ever becoming dangerous. It is obvious that such an opinion, which is incompatible with the existence of party spirit in the sense in which

we understand the term in England, has an inevitable tendency to draw off the attention of those who hold it from matters of domestic policy. And Vergennes seems never to have looked upon the grievances or feelings of his own countrymen, or the ideas which were springing up among the middle class, as worthy of a statesman's notice, but to have concentrated all his own energies and talents, which were very considerable, in foreign politics; and in his management of them, except when he plunged his country into war with England, he manifested a clear perception of the interests of France, and high diplomatic capacity. It had been chiefly owing to his influence and skill in negotiation that, in 1779, the disputes about the Bavarian succession, which at one time had threatened to involve the whole Continent in war, were amicably settled by the peace of Teschen, which was so skilfully arranged that both Austria and Prussia thought themselves gainers by it, and of which France became the guarantee. And in 1782 he showed equal abilities, though in a more confined field, in appeasing an insurrection which had broken out in Geneva, and in persuading the two factions, which previously had agitated that beautiful city with their ceaseless quarrels, to live in peace under a constitution, which was also placed under the guarantee of France.

At the beginning of 1783, Joly de Fleury was dismissed. Little as Vergennes regarded domestic affairs, he attended to them sufficiently to discover his subordinate's incapacity, and to doubt his integrity; but when he replaced him with D'Ormesson, whose sole qualification for court favour was that his aunt was mistress to the keeper of the seals, he only exchanged him for one who, if he had more honesty, had even less ability. He had not sought the post, and at first

excused himself from accepting it on the ground of his youth ; but the king overruled his plea, with the remark that he himself was younger, and that his place was still more difficult. D'Ormesson did not want courage. He refused to appropriate the public money to the payment of the debts of the king's brother, and tried, though in vain, to check the lavish good-nature of Louis himself. But as he was wholly ignorant of accounts, and even of arithmetic, he soon brought the finances into a state of inextricable confusion, while the measures which he adopted to provide for the instant necessities of the State were tantamount to acts of bankruptcy. In his unskilful hands lotteries failed, and loans could only be procured of insufficient amount, and at high interest. He compelled the bank to advance a vast sum to the treasury, enjoining the directors to secrecy, which in such a matter was probably impracticable, and which, at all events on this occasion, too many were interested in violating to allow it to be maintained for a moment. To compensate the bank for its complaisance, he authorized it to limit its cash payments to bills below three hundred livres. And this measure spread a universal embarrassment among all the traders of the kingdom that led to his downfall. Even before his incapacity was seen to be so mischievous, it had been felt to be ridiculous, and all Paris had been ringing with the witticisms of jesters who made a butt even of his personal honesty, because of the absence of the talent which in such an office was requisite to set it off. Even his patron, Miromesnil, confessed that it was impossible to support him ; and at the end of a few months Vergennes dismissed him even more curtly than he had discarded his predecessor.

But his mismanagement had made it harder than

ever to find him a successor. Loménie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, was indeed eager for the post, not because he had any knowledge of financial subjects, but because he coveted official power of any kind, and had unmeasured confidence in his own talents. Some of the courtiers recommended a provincial intendant named Foulon, who in his own province had shown himself unscrupulous in expedients, and merciless in repressing and chastising discontent, and who openly laughed at the scruples of those who were shocked at the idea of a national bankruptcy. The minister of marine, the Marquis de Castries, besought the king to recall Necker, which would certainly have been the wisest step that could have been adopted, from the confidence generally felt in his financial talents. But Louis had been too strongly prejudiced against him two years before to be willing to receive him back; and, after some deliberation, his choice fell on Monsieur de Calonne, a man who had for years occupied a prominent position, though the notoriety which he had acquired was not wholly of a favorable character.*

He was the son of an old president of the Parliament of Douai, to which, after being called to the bar at Paris, he had himself become attorney-general. He had afterwards been promoted to be intendant of Lille; and in every post he had distinguished himself by the clearness of intellect which he brought to the consideration of every subject, and still more by the lucidity of his reports, which especially recommended him to the favour of his superiors. He had acquired a worse reputation by his conduct in the case of La Chalotais, whose disgrace had been chiefly brought

* V. ante, c. xxx.

about by his evidence, which was undoubtedly false, though there is no reason to suppose that it was intentionally so, or that it was dictated by any malice. He had, however, powerful friends who, from the commencement of the present reign, had recommended him so strongly to the queen and to the Count d'Artois, that they had been for some time exerting their influence to obtain for him an introduction to the Council of State. And female interest of another kind was now added, and proved irresistible; so little had the personal virtue and example of the sovereigns been able as yet to purify their court. D'Harvelai, the court banker, was intimate with Vergennes, and Madame D'Harvelai, his wife, was far too intimate with Calonne, who was a man of profligate morals. To please the lady, D'Harvelai now recommended her gallant to the all-powerful minister,* and Louis willingly granted the vacant post to one for whose advancement so many were solicitous.

Calonne knew well that he was undertaking a difficult task, or rather that the task before him was full of difficulties, if he applied himself to the duties of his new office in a laborious and conscientious spirit. And the difficulties of which he was aware were in reality greatly augmented by another, which he seems never to have taken into his calculation, the growing unpopularity of the court. The two princes, the king's brothers, were regarded with general dislike. The elder, the Count de Provence, was reserved, pedantic, and pompous. The younger, the Count d'Artois, though more affable in manner, never attempted to conceal his contempt for the lower classes, nor his disapproval of any concessions designed to conciliate

* Monthyon, p. 275.

them.* The queen herself was the object of suspicions which were worse than dislike, suspicions of her loyalty to her adopted country, which were wholly false; suspicions of her fidelity to her husband, which, if possible, were still more unfounded. The king, though no one presumed to charge him with a single vice, or to deny his sincere anxiety to promote the welfare of his people, had excited feelings which perhaps are even more dangerous, when felt towards a ruler of people, than suspicion, or even positive dislike. Men despised him. They looked on him as one devoid of any kind of ability or resolution, the sport of any one who might choose to impose upon him, the slave and tool of any one who would take the trouble to govern him. And it would be difficult to affirm that this judgment of his mind or character was unduly disparaging. He took, indeed, an enlightened interest in his navy, and in everything which concerned it; in promoting the study of maritime geography,† and of other branches of science which might facilitate navigation; but with this single exception his pursuits, and the objects which attracted his attention, were of the most frivolous character. His chief passion was shooting, which absorbed him to an incredible degree. He kept a journal, in which he noted, with the most careful minuteness, those events of each day which most interested him, which is still

* In 1771 the queen describes them to Maria Teresa: "M. de Provence, tout jeune qu'il soit, est un homme qui se livre peu, et se tient dans sa cravatte. Je n'ose pas parler devant lui depuis que je l'ai entendu, à un cercle, reprendre déjà pour une petite faute de langue la pauvre Clotilde, qui ne savait où se cacher. Le Comte d'Artois est léger comme un page, et s'inquiète moins de la grammaire, ni de quioque ce soit."—*Letters in the collection of M. Feuillet de Conches*, i. 19.

† See his letter to M. de Sartines. *Feuillet de Conches*, i. 78; date June 1, 1776.

extant. By far the greater part of the entries refer to the quantity of game he killed, and to the suitableness or unsuitableness of the weather for his sport. Days on which he did not shoot are often set down as blank, though they were marked by some of the most momentous events in the history of the country and of himself.*

Still the feelings of contempt which Louis excited were, like himself, passive. The enmities which pursued Marie Antoinette were active and untiring. The time was past when her attendants could tell her, with not more courtliness than truth, that all who gazed on her were so many lovers.† No small portion of them now made it their regular business to ridicule or condemn or calumniate all her actions and motives. They were stimulated in no small degree by her elder brother-in-law, the Count de Provence. The main-spring of his conduct was probably a bigoted attachment to old forms, which, in graver matters than those of court etiquette, led him to oppose all the measures of Turgot and Necker, and which made him resent, almost as a personal offence, the queen's abridgement of ceremony. So rigid, indeed, was his own adherence

* This journal covers the period from Jan. 1, 1766, to July 31, 1792, and Amédée Renée quotes the following extracts from it for the week preceding and including the capture of the Bastille: "Juillet, 1789, Jeudi 9, Rien, Députation des États; Vendredi 10, Rien, Députation des États; Samedi 11, Rien, Départ de M. Necker; Mardi 14, Rien;" this being the very day of the capture, which his own officers warned him was the beginning of a revolution. Other entries contain a minute record of his purchase of lottery tickets, and of his winnings from that source.

† On her first entrance into Paris, when she stepped forth into the balcony of the Tuilleries to gratify the citizens with a sight of their new princess, she was amazed at the vastness of the multitude. "Elle se cria, en voyant toutes ces têtes pressées, les yeux levés vers elle, 'Grand Dieu, que de monde!' 'Madame,' lui dit le vieux Duc de Brissac, gouverneur de Paris, 'sans que Monseigneur le Dauphin puisse s'en offenser, ce sont autant d'amoureux.'"—Madame de Campan, c. iii.

to the practices of his ancestors, that, though neither by temperament nor inclination addicted to licentiousness, he thought it necessary to establish a mistress, a Countess de Balbi, at the Luxembourg, his Parisian residence, where she presided over his receptions to the exclusion of his lawful princess. He seemed to make it his chief rule of conduct to thwart the queen's wishes, and very often to disparage her objects. With such a leader, whom any accident might seat on the throne, of which, till the end of 1781, he was the presumptive heir, it was not wonderful that a band of courtiers, who carried their infidelity in matters of religion to a disbelief in virtue of any kind, should have devoted their industry and ingenuity to the invention of the foulest libels against her. And even now, when her innocence of all but thoughtlessness is incontestably established, and when, had graver faults been substantiated against her, censure would be disarmed of its severity by the recollections of the unparalleled misery of her latter days, and the magnanimous dignity with which she endured it, it is impossible to avoid seeing that, in many points, her levity was incompatible with, her amusements unsuited to, the dignity of her position. It is quite true that many of the censures directed against her were absurd and contemptible; as, for instance, when the city of Lyons made a formal complaint that she preferred muslins to silks for her summer gowns, and libellers seriously alleged her preference as an instance of her continued devotion to Austrian interests, since, while silk was a French manufacture, muslin came from her brother's dominions in the Low Countries. But when she was seen milking her cows or making hay in the meadows of her little park at Trianon, still more when, in the private theatricals which formed one of her favourite

pastimes, she acted herself, selecting the parts of waiting-maids, and eliciting the laughter of the spectators, though only a select few were admitted to such an honour, by the archness of her humour, it was impossible to deny that she was carrying her love of simplicity and her condescension much too far; and, when she proceeded to attend the masked balls at the opera, even though on such occasions she was generally accompanied by the king,* it was still clearer that his presence, which no one could suppose to be spontaneous, was no justification of the appearance of the first lady of the land, one of whose chief duties was the encouragement of purity by the discountenancing of everything of a contrary, or even of a doubtful character, at revels, whose inevitable tendency was to degenerate into scenes of riot and licence. It was not, therefore, strange that the queen's conduct, though absolutely free from anything that would have been impropriety in a subject, should be severely commented on, or that, as will be hereafter seen, unfriendly comments grew into deliberate attempts to fasten criminality upon her. Her hand-writing was forged† to love-letters and orders for money, with the

* Louis did not always make one of the party, and on one occasion when he did not, an accident happened which the queen's own imprudence rendered a general topic of conversation. She was on her way from St. Cloud, attended only by the Duchess de Luynes, her chief lady-in-waiting. Just at the gates of Paris her carriage broke down, and she with the duchess took refuge in a shop while a footman fetched a hackney coach. As both the ladies were masked, no one need have known of the occurrence; but Marie Antoinette was so amused at the novelty of the conveyance, that on her arrival at the opera-house she could not forbear telling those of her acquaintance whom she met how she had come, which those who heard it thought a great degradation of majesty. On another occasion she and the Duchess de Vauguyon were accosted and drawn into a long conversation with a perfect stranger, who mistook their masks for those of two of his own friends."—*Madame de Campan*, c. vii.

† *Ibid.*, c. vi.

object of representing her as devoted to gallantry and intrigue ; and, though in more than one instance the forgers were detected and punished, the impression made by their acts lasted so as to tarnish her fame in the eyes of no inconsiderable portion of the populace.

Such a feeling towards the royal family was an additional impediment in the path of any minister, even in the most tranquil times ; still more so when embarrassments and disorders had to be dealt with, the existence of which, as they could only have been caused by mismanagement in preceding Governments, necessarily laid open to some degree of personal reproach a sovereign who advanced such pretensions to universal superintendence of everything as the king, at Vergennes' dictation, had lately put forward. But Calonne took little heed of this or any other difficulty. He was not unfitted to grapple with such, for he was endowed with brilliant abilities, with fertility of resources, presence of mind, and courage ; but he was also unconscientious, careless, and vain. He had been ambitious, and was fond of office, chiefly because it supplied him with additional means of indulgence ; but, besides that his devotion to pleasure left him little time for the discharge of his duties, his vanity prompted him to make light of them, as if the absence of all anxiety, or even of care and diligence, were a proof of superior ability, and as if treating obstacles with levity and unconcern were identical with vanquishing them. On one occasion Marie Antoinette applied to him for a service which, as she stated, she knew to be difficult. "Madame," replied the courtly councillor, "if it is only difficult, it is done from this moment ; if it is impossible we will manage it." He was, perhaps, the more anxious to please the queen, because he was aware that from the

very first she regarded him with disfavour;* but he carried the same maxim or pretension into everything. The statement of the financial condition of the country published by Necker had, as we have seen, been fallacious, as passing over the vast amount of the extraordinary charges; and, had it been ever so correct, as applied to the time when its framer quitted office, it would still have been entirely upset by the mismanagement of his successors, who had dissipated the funds which Necker had left in the treasury, and had increased the deficit to an amount which, though it cannot be stated with precision, was certainly far beyond any former example. Calonne estimated it himself at eighty millions, and others have computed it at half as much again,† and there were also three hundred millions of arrears due, chiefly for the expenses of the war; while nearly two hundred millions of the revenue for the coming year had been anticipated, collected, and spent. The nation, as he represented it, had neither money nor credit.

Yet, with these embarrassments around him, and this entire consciousness of their magnitude, Calonne not only attempted no reforms, but even discarded all those which had been introduced by Necker, and resorted to the worst parts of the systems of Joly de

* "La reine n'ayant pu empêcher la nomination de M. Calonne, ne déguisa pas assez le mécontentement qu'elle en avait. Elle dit . . . que les finances passaient alternativement des mains d'un honnête homme sans talent dans celles d'un habile intrigant."—Madame de Campan, c. xi.

† See ante, note. The sketch in the "Biog. Univ." there alluded to, while stating the deficit at 115,000,000 *at least*, affirms that that was Calonne's own calculation. Bailly, "Histoire Financière" (quoted by Amédée Renée), states the whole debt at 646,000,000, and the acquits de comptant, which were entirely absorbed by extraordinary expenses, at 140,000,000 a year. The statement given in the text is contained in his speech to the Notables four years afterwards, in which he describes the state of affairs when he took office.

Fleury and D'Ormesson, if either of them could be said to have had any system at all. He indeed even went beyond them in their extravagance, which he professed to adopt on principle. The great English reformer of the finances had just laid it down that frugality was itself a great revenue.* His favourite apophthegm, on the contrary, was that prodigality is a large economy.† Acting in this view in his private affairs, he presented one of his mistresses with a box of sweetmeats every one of which was wrapped up in a bank note; and he was not less indulgent to others than to himself. D'Ormesson, as we have seen, had refused to take money from the public purse for the payment of the princes' debts; but Calonne not only paid those which they had incurred, but encouraged them to incur more, and to lavish on furniture, entertainments, and more objectionable objects, sums far beyond the expenditure of any other princes in Europe.§ No one whose rank, or position, or influence made him worth propitiating was ever denied anything; and demands on the treasury were multiplied from the facility with which they were granted and at times anticipated. One noble explained the magnitude of the sums which he extracted from the treasury by saying that as he saw every one else holding out his hand, he thought he might as well hold out his hat. There have been few courts at any time where such an example would not have been followed; and that of Versailles was certainly not one of them. To meet this vast increase of expenditure every re-

* "*Magnum est vectigal parsimonia*"—quoted by Burke.

† Bailly, "*Histoire Financière*," ii. 252.

‡ Droz, "*Louis XVI.*," i. 409.

§ Dr. Moore, ii. 134-8, says that Calonne paid for the Count d'Artois more than a million of English money.

source which had ever been adopted by the hungriest of preceding financiers was put in requisition. New taxes were devised, and old ones augmented; annuities were transmuted into perpetual charges; offices were created solely for the purpose of sale; and enormous loans were contracted for at interest which rose with each demand of the ever-needy minister.

Calonne was evidently hurrying on the State to ruin at a quickened pace; yet for a time, as he forbore to touch the exemptions of the nobles and clergy, he was popular with them; and all those who had access to the king's ear were loud in his praise. The re-establishment of peace was in his favour; since that of itself revived the commerce and industry, and, as a natural consequence, the general prosperity of the country, and rendered it for a while better able to bear the increase of its burdens. His vast loans, too, encouraged speculation, which at first always gives the appearance of wealth; and, to feed the delusions which it was his chief business to create, he even ventured on the establishment of a sinking fund, and declared by a pompous edict that the funds appropriated to it should never be diverted to any other purpose. He avoided falsifying the declaration by avoiding also appropriating a single farthing to the fund; but with all his ingenuity he could not prevent suspicions arising of the hollowness of his whole system. The capitalists saw plainly that the debt was increasing at a pace out of proportion to any possible augmentation of the resources of the country; and credit began to fall. Even some of the minister's measures which were salutary in themselves contributed to the same result by the frauds to which they opened the door. He had endeavoured to remedy the injury inflicted on the credit of the bank through D'Ormesson's bank-

rupt devices, by paying up the arrears due to its creditors; but when this intention was announced, so extensive were the forgeries of its notes, and so little care or discrimination was exercised in discharging them, that it was presently ascertained that four times as much had been paid as was actually owing.

The winter of 1783 was one of unusual severity; and the distress to which the poorer classes of the capital were reduced might have been expected to restore some degree of popularity to the royal family, from the munificent efforts which Louis, his queen, and his sisters, made to relieve it. It served also to prove (though this transaction was a secret to all but the inmates of the palace) the devotion of Marie Antoinette not only to her husband's person, but also to his character and reputation. He had ordered Calonne to set apart three millions for the assistance of those who were in the greatest distress; and the crafty minister, seeking to gain the favour of the queen, and little appreciating her virtue and magnanimity, proposed to her to pay one of the millions to her treasurer, that it might be distributed in her name to the most deserving and necessitous objects of the royal bounty. But she indignantly rejected so insidious and base an idea, insisting that all should be given in the name of the king alone; and expressing her resolution to augment the magnificent contribution by curtailing her personal expenditure, and dedicating the sums usually applied to pleasure and indulgence to the succour of her husband's subjects.*

Unhappily the citizens in general, and more espe-

* "La reine lui répondit que ce bienfait entier devait être distribué au nom du roi; et qu'elle se priverait cette année des moindres jouissances pour ajouter au soulagement des malheureux ce que ses épargnes lui permettraient de leur offrir."—Madame de Campan, c. xi.

cially the literary men and other leaders of opinion in Paris, were far more interested in a question into which, though apparently literature alone, and that not of the highest class, was involved, politics in reality entered in an absorbing degree. Some years before a writer named Beaumarchais had greatly contributed to bring Maupeou's new Parliament into contempt by his conduct of a lawsuit in which he was engaged before it. And he had rendered himself conspicuous and eminent all over France by the richness of the satirical wit with which, when the professed lawyers refused him their advocacy, he had himself conducted his case. At the beginning of Calonne's ministry he had made himself prominent in opposition by writing pamphlets in support of a company formed to supply Paris with water, which the controller discountenanced, employing the Count de Mirabeau, as yet known chiefly as a licentious noble, whose necessities compelled him to place his pen at the service of any one who would pay for it, to reply to his arguments. But Beaumarchais had found out that his real genius lay in dramatic literature, and he had been at the same time occupying himself in the composition of a comedy, which he entitled the "Marriage of Figaro;" a name which he had already rendered famous in a former play, the "Barber of Seville." There can be no greater proof both of the weakness and want of judgment of the Government than the circumstance that it chose to give it political importance by proscribing it. To a reader of the present day it can only seem a lively play, not quite of the first class if it be compared with the best works of Molière, but still amusing and attractive, partly from the smart sayings and witty repartees which are scattered through its scenes, but perhaps more from its incessant vivacity and bustle,

and a series of theatrically happy situations. It so far differed from the works of the dramatists most in vogue that, while they usually portrayed the grandee in brighter colours than the peasant, in this the nobleman was baffled and made ridiculous by the triumph of the virtuous innocence of the lowly maiden; while some of the most sparkling jests and keenest sarcasms were directed, not solely at his designs, but at the pretensions often practically asserted, and at the privileges which, though generally disused, were still legally possessed by his class. It was probably on this account that the minister of police forbade its representation. And this arbitrary act of power, which of late had seldom been exercised, at once made the play an object of interest to thousands who, if it had been acted in the ordinary way, would have never dreamt of attaching any serious consequence to its jests or catastrophe. The literary men took up arms for a brother author. The nobles themselves, among a large party of whom Beaumarchais lived as a favourite and friend, though they themselves were in this instance the butts of his pleasantry, yet were ardent in his cause, partly from pure heedlessness, partly from a love of excitement, and in many cases from a spirit of opposition to the Government. They insisted on the prohibition being withdrawn. The agitation penetrated into the palace itself, where Louis had it read to the queen and himself.* He condemned it as conceived and written in bad taste, and declared that he would never allow it to be acted. But his personal disapproval only increased the excitement which prevailed on the subject; if it may not be said, from the experience all the world

* Madame de Campan, c. xi.—She herself was the reader.

had of the frequency with which his judgment was overborne, that it even increased the probability that the play would be acted. Half the gambling in Paris took the shape of wagers on the event; and the winners were they who staked on Beaumarchais' triumph. With the connivance of some of the officers of the king's own household, and some false statements that the passages most objected to had been erased, it was permitted to be performed at some private theatricals which were given by one of the courtiers in his own house to the Count de Provence. After that it became impossible to prevent its public performance. The contest of which it had been the subject invested it with such popularity that it was performed for above a hundred nights without interruption: the sarcasms against the higher classes and people in authority naturally gaining additional keenness from the knowledge of the efforts that had been made to silence them; and the Government having done nothing but expose itself and the king to the ridicule of a notorious defeat.

It was while Paris was still in the ferment occasioned by this singular transaction, than which none more strikingly shows the mixed character of the nation, and the singular combination of frivolity and resolution with which it was looking forward to great constitutional changes; and while the court, the great nobles, and more especially the queen, were still objects of the popular discontent; that the city was supplied with food for fresh excitement by another event, which was in fact only a conspiracy to swindle a jeweller; but which for a moment was looked upon as involving a State secret of no less importance than the honour of the queen. Of all the French nobles not one preserved a deeper taint of the

licentiousness of the last reign than the Cardinal de Rohan, Bishop of Strasburg, and grand almoner of France. In spite of his position as a prince of the church, he lived in undisguised profligacy. In spite of the enormous revenues which he derived from his different preferments, he was as bankrupt in purse as in character, and gloried equally in his debauchery and his indebtedness, asserting that it became a Rohan to be gallant, and that no man of gallantry could live on fifty thousand a year. It was equally understood that he was not too nice as to the means either of succeeding in his love affairs or of replenishing his exchequer. And among his mistresses was one, the Countess de la Motte, who, though of birth as high as his own, was as deeply embarrassed in her affairs and as entirely unembarrassed by scruples as himself. In one respect the advantage was on her side. He was of the lowest calibre in point of intellect, and formed by vanity as well as by silliness to be a dupe. She was shrewd and artful; quick at penetrating the character and views of others, and dexterous at working on them. It was no secret to any one that the cardinal was held in great disfavour by both king and queen on account of his dissolute life; while Marie Antoinette had also a personal reason for disliking him, since in the last years of the preceding reign he had been ambassador at Vienna, and had availed himself of his position to calumniate her to her countrymen. Now, however, being settled in Paris, he was anxious to recover her good opinion; and in this desire of his Madame la Motte saw the means of enriching herself.

Boehmer, the court-jeweller, had some years before made a necklace of magnificent diamonds, which he valued at 1,600,000 livres, and had endeavoured to

prevail on Louis XV. to buy for Madame du Barry. He had subsequently offered it to Marie Antoinette, who, never caring much for jewels or personal finery, and being aware of the general exhaustion of the treasury, and of the heavy drains which the war was making on it, positively refused to spend on a trinket a sum which, as she expressed herself, would equip a man-of-war for the country; and when Boehmer applied to Louis himself, who would gladly have given it to her, she persuaded him to make a similar answer. Madame la Motte knew all that had taken place; and resolved to get the necklace for herself. She represented to the cardinal that she was in the queen's confidence; that the queen wished for the necklace, and was inclined to make him her agent in obtaining it from Boehmer on the terms of paying for it by instalments. She even produced a note from the queen, authorizing the cardinal to conclude the arrangement for her, imitating her general handwriting with sufficient closeness, but forging a signature such as neither she nor any other queen of France had ever used.* The cardinal, however, in spite of his greater familiarity with the ways of courts, took no heed of the informality; but willingly entered into the business. To confirm him in his delusion, la Motte next persuaded him that the queen had consented to grant him a midnight interview in the garden of the Trianon; and having found a common woman of the town, named Oliva, who resembled her in height,

* The signature, as forged, was "Marie Antoinette de France," but a queen signed only her Christian name. The addition "de France" could only be used by a prince or princess, a son or daughter of a king. Wraxall ("Posthumous Memoirs," ii. 191) relates that there had been other instances (some as much as eight years before) of ladies obtaining articles of dress from the queen's tradespeople by forging her signature; which she had pardoned.

dressed her in a cloak resembling the queen's, and conducted her to meet him. Oliva's part was easy. She had but to drop a rose at the cardinal's feet, and to whisper "The past is forgotten," to complete the work of blinding him. A similar forgery was shown to Boehmer, who likewise took no notice of the informal signature, nor of the fact that in all former dealings with him the orders had invariably been signed by the Princess Lamballe,* as the superintendent of the queen's household. He delivered the necklace to the countess; who, singularly enough, did not at once escape with her booty, but remained within reach of detection and punishment.

In the summer of 1785 the first instalment which had been promised to Boehmer became due; and on his application for it the whole fraud was discovered. It was so plain that the cardinal could not have been wholly a dupe, and so notorious also that a band of disloyal libellers was always ready to interpret everything to the queen's disadvantage, that Vergennes strongly advised that the matter should be hushed up to save both the church and the royal family from scandal. But Marie Antoinette, indignant at the liberty which had been taken with her name, refused to permit any compromise with justice, and insisted on the criminals being brought to trial. The cardinal was first brought before Louis himself for a personal examination, and then committed to the Bastille; the affair of his arrest being, however, so ill managed that time was given him to send a message to his secretary to burn all his papers. The countess and Oliva were seized at the same time; and with them an Italian, named Balsamo, known at Paris by the

* "*Mémoires de la Princesse de Lamballe*," i. 293.

assumed title of Count Cagliostro, who as an astrologer and alchemist, had imposed on many needy nobles in every country of Europe, and had undoubtedly gained the ear of De Rohan. They were prosecuted before the great chamber by the crown lawyers. The trial lasted nearly a year, and did but little credit to the firmness of the Government or the impartiality of the tribunal. Great interest was made by De Rohan's family and connexions to save him from conviction; and it prevailed. He was acquitted, and with him Cagliostro, who had probably no connexion with any part of the transaction. Oliva was lightly punished by banishment from Paris, since it did not appear that she had known the object for which she had been employed to personate the queen. The whole severity of the punishment was reserved for the countess. She was condemned to be whipped, branded, and imprisoned for life. But after a year or two she escaped to England to join her husband, who had fled thither with the necklace the moment that the business was discovered. On its proceeds they lived for some time, employing their leisure in inventing and publishing the foulest libels against the queen. Her subsequent fate was singular and shocking. The money she had procured by the sale of the diamonds, like other ill-gotten gains, was soon spent. She was arrested for debt in London, and confined in a sponging-house; from which she tried to escape, as she had from the Salpêtrière. But the room from which she endeavoured to descend was at the top of the house; and missing her footing she fell on the pavement, and was dashed to pieces.

Marie Antoinette was indignant beyond measure at the acquittal of the cardinal, which she regarded as a pointed affront to herself. But it only saved him

from legal punishment. He was deprived of his post of grand almoner, and banished from Paris to one of his abbeyes, where he soon after died.* For some months the affair continued to furnish pretexts to obscure libellers to calumniate the queen with charges not less offensive nor less dangerous for their vagueness: but presently graver affairs drove it from people's minds: and it had long been forgotten by the world in general, when in 1825, long after king and queen and monarchy, and even the revolution which had destroyed them and the empire which had supplanted them, had all passed away, an old man in the lowest state of destitution and wretchedness presented himself to the minister of police, imploring relief for the remnant of his days, and stating himself to be Count de la Motte. The trial had sufficiently demonstrated the queen's complete ignorance of the whole transaction; but as her daughter, the Duchess d'Angoulême, was still alive, the minister thought it would be a satisfaction to her to have it confessed by one who had been an accomplice in the fraud; and la Motte accordingly drew up a statement of the affair, which fully confirmed the conclusions suggested by the trial.†

It has been mentioned that Louis regarded England with inveterate dislike; and it was probably with a view to a renewal of the war with this country that, shortly after the conclusion of peace, he began to expend large sums on Cherbourg to render it an arsenal and harbour for ships of war. A large party in England, led by Fox and Burke, looked upon the

* Madame de Campan, c. xii., from whose account most of the details given in the text are taken.

†, "Marie Antoinette," &c., i. 169.

construction of such works in such a situation as an open menace; denounced them as such in the House of Commons, and even showed some inclination to plunge at once into war to prevent their completion: Burke declaring that their magnitude and solidity was such that the pyramids of Egypt shrank to nothing in comparison, and that they would enable France to stretch out her arms over both Portsmouth and Plymouth at once, and make her mistress of the Channel; while Fox inveighed still more pointedly against her inveterate bad faith and hostility, and in language strangely imprudent for one who had been a cabinet minister and hoped to be such again, pronounced her the natural enemy of Britain. The works, however, were continued with great energy and judgment; the king, whose fondness for his navy and comprehension of its interests has been already mentioned as his one statesmanlike quality, making more than one visit to the coast to watch and encourage their progress. But fortunately, however eloquent might be the denunciations of the great Whig orators, the Government of England was at this time in wiser hands; instead of threatening the threatener Pitt applied himself to remove the jealousy which Louis entertained of his Government, and to bind the two countries together by a close commercial connexion, which had been foreshadowed in some of the articles of the treaty of 1783, though all details had been left open for subsequent arrangement.* He found Vergennes willing to co-operate with him. According to that statesman's views, as they were reported to Pitt by the agent he despatched to France,

* "Lord Auckland's Memoirs," vol. i. p. 126. For the whole negotiation and details of the treaty see the same work, c. v, vi.

the attitude which it was most for the interest and honour of France to preserve was "a state of readiness for war combined with a system of intercourse and commerce to maintain peace." And this was so much Pitt's own notion of the condition requisite for the independence of every country, that the report so made to him engendered in his mind confidence rather than jealousy.

Calonne, too, was disinclined to war; his prodigality in other matters would alone have made it almost impossible for him to provide funds for a single campaign, and two years' experience of the difficulty of raising money to meet even the current expenses of peace had already convinced him that he must apply all his ingenuity to the reduction of the existing debt.* In spite of his carelessness and unscrupulousness he had so keen an observation and so shrewd a judgment, that in his three first years of office he had imperceptibly learnt many a lesson of and imbibed much of the true spirit of statesmanship. He had also gradually become imbued, it is fair to believe, with an honest ambition to leave behind him a name as one whose career as its ruler had been beneficial to his country; and the last years of his administration offer a marked and creditable contrast to the rashness and extravagance of its opening. Accordingly a negotiation for a commercial treaty between the two countries was at once set on foot, in which by the confession of the British commissioner himself, Mr. Eden, the French ministers conducted themselves with uniform candour and fairness. The treaty was finally concluded and signed in September, 1786, and was calculated to be

* See his conversation with Mr. Eden.—"Auckland's Memoirs," i. 100, also p. 156.

of the greatest benefit to the trade, and especially to the manufacturers of both nations. Hitherto a great number of the productions of each country had been either denied admittance into the other altogether, or subjected to a duty which was a practical prohibition; and these excessive imposts had begotten so vast an amount of smuggling, which in France was a capital offence on a second conviction, that of many articles of the first necessity it was computed that only one-eighth that crossed the water paid the tax, while seven-eighths yielded a ceaseless business and an enormous profit to the contraband trader. But this new treaty substituted for that system of prohibition an almost universal freedom of importation at a moderate rate of duty, which very rarely exceeded 15 per cent. on the value, and in most instances was considerably lower. One of the few exceptions to the freedom of importation was silk, in which article Pitt found the influence of the British manufacturer too strong for him to overcome by any concession, and accordingly the French negotiators were compelled to acquiesce in the valuable manufactures of Lyons being still excluded from Britain; but they trusted, no doubt, that as the removal or diminution of restrictions in other cases proved harmless or advantageous, the knowledge of that fact would propitiate the men of Spitalfields, and lead them to acquiesce in silk being placed on the same footing as the other manufactures of France. Meanwhile it was no trifling advantage to have opened the English markets to the linens, cambrics, and laces of the French manufacturers; nor had the landowners and vine dressers less cause to be grateful for the regulation which admitted the wines of France into England on the same footing as those of the most favoured

nation, Britain's old ally of Portugal; while to almost every class of producer the regulation which facilitated the introduction of English coal was an inestimable benefit.

The treaty, however, was not universally popular: in the southern provinces, and especially at Bordeaux, it was fairly appreciated as a wise and patriotic measure; but in the north, especially among the woollen and cotton manufacturers of Picardy and Normandy, it was at first regarded with great disapproval. It may perhaps be taken as some proof of the equity with which the whole agreement was concluded, that it was equally blamed by the English manufacturers of Birmingham and Manchester, though their complaints had reference rather to the manner in which it was carried out than to the principles which had guided the negotiators. The traveller to whose patient investigations and impartial statements we chiefly owe the knowledge of the feelings that existed at the time on the subject in both countries, while he admits the difficulty of deciding on the justice of all the complaints without more accurate information concerning not only the legitimate but the contraband trade in each, than the statistics of either could supply, pronounces positively that, as a political measure tending to produce and cement peace between the two nations, its wisdom could not possibly be called in question.* Yet it was hardly signed before it seemed probable that war between them was on the very point of renewal on a subject not wholly unconnected with this very treaty. It had hardly been signed when some disputes arose as to the extent and manner in which its provisions were

* See Arthur Young, p. 5, 47, 499, *et seq.*

applicable to the Eastern settlements of the two countries; and Vergennes at once began to strengthen the French fleet in the Indian seas, and to negotiate a treaty with the Dutch, whose possessions in those regions made them at all times eager to check the progress of the English. He had already established a claim on the goodwill of the Dutch Government by the promptitude and vigour with which he had in 1784 assisted them against the emperor. That sovereign, after a series of successful encroachments on the rights which different treaties had secured to the Dutch, had at last demanded that they should open the Scheldt to his vessels. On their refusal he had sent some vessels up the river to force a passage, which were fired at and captured; and as such an act was manifestly the commencement of war, the Dutch Government applied to France for aid. Vergennes received the request gladly; sent an army to the frontier, and a diplomatic note to Vienna, offering his sovereign's mediation between the emperor and the republic, but declaring that if it were not accepted France would support the Dutch. The mediation thus peremptorily proffered was accepted, and in the autumn of 1785 peace was concluded between the disputants, and guaranteed by Louis. But the democratic party in Holland, which saw in the conduct of the French ministers on this occasion an inclination to support them at all times and in every dispute, were encouraged by this belief to adopt a policy of insult to the stadtholder,* which had for its manifest aim the final overthrow of his

* "They even suspended him from the exercise of his authority as Captain-General of Holland, and deprived him of the command of the garrison of the Hague."—"Malmesbury's Correspondence," ii. 271, 325.

authority. At last, in June 1787, they proceeded so far that they stopped the Princess of Orange in her carriage as she was travelling from Nimeguen to the Hague, and put her under arrest; but by so audacious an act they overreached themselves. The princess was the sister of the young King of Prussia, who in the preceding year had succeeded Frederick the Great; he instantly demanded redress for the insult offered to her, and prepared to enforce his demand by instant war. The Dutch implored the aid of France, which was willingly promised them; but England was bound by treaty to support the stadtholder; and in pursuance of this engagement Pitt at once instructed the Duke of Dorset, the British ambassador in Paris, to declare that in the event of war the whole power of England would be united to that of Prussia in defence of the stadtholder's rights. The declaration had hardly been uttered when the French ministry discovered that they had entirely misunderstood the feelings of the Dutch people, and had pledged themselves to a course which must not only plunge them into war, but which, even if successful in war, they could hardly carry out. The Prussians had been beforehand with them, sending the Duke of Brunswick with a small army, which did not exceed twenty thousand men, in the middle of September into Holland. He in a single week crushed the democratic party everywhere except in Amsterdam; in a fortnight more took that city also, and amid acclamations which were all but universal completely re-established the Prince of Orange in his authority. The cabinet at Versailles accepted the situation, and not only renounced its intention of upholding its

partisans in Holland, but signed a fresh treaty with England by which it was agreed that all warlike preparations should be discontinued by both countries, and their military and naval armaments reduced.

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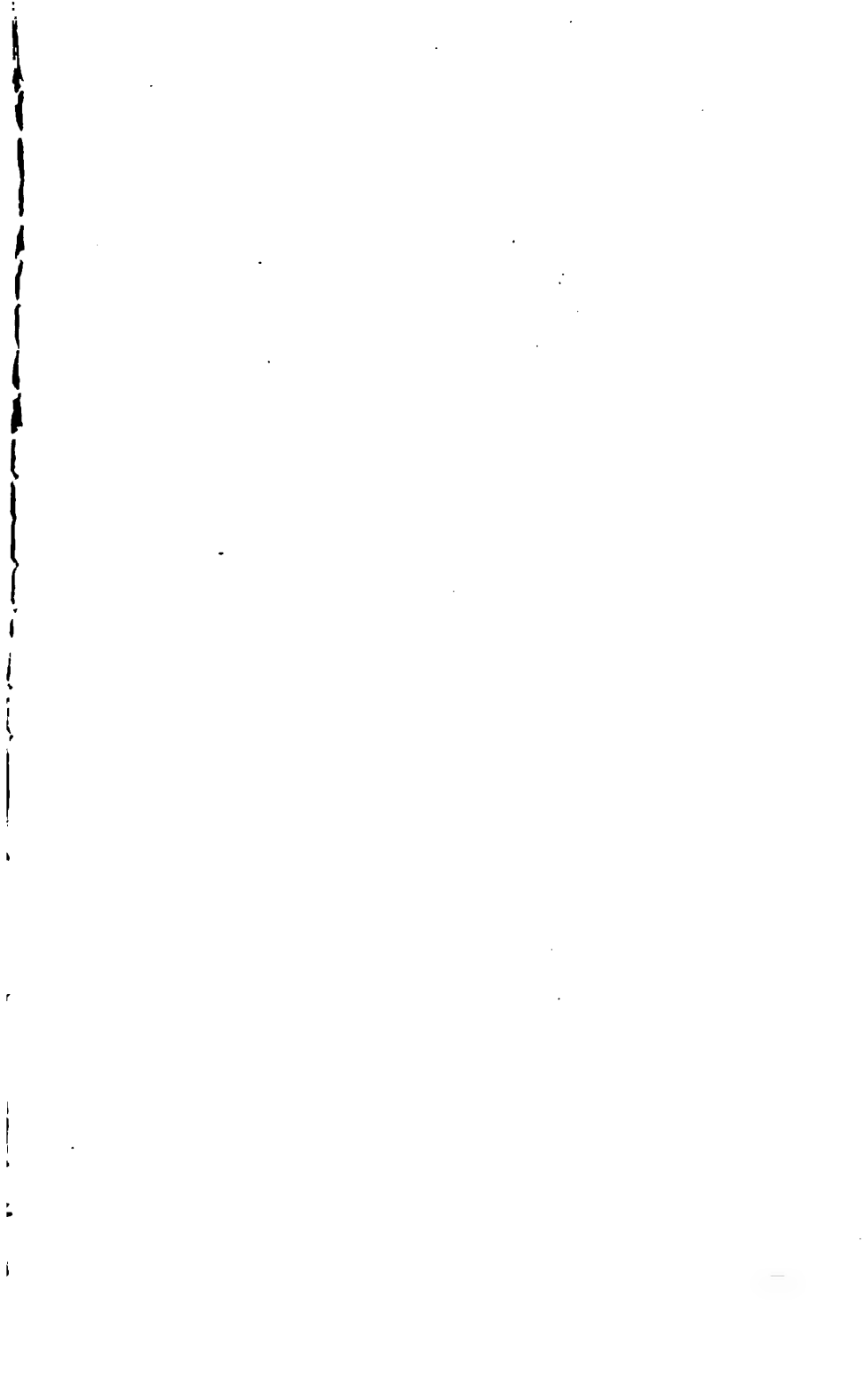
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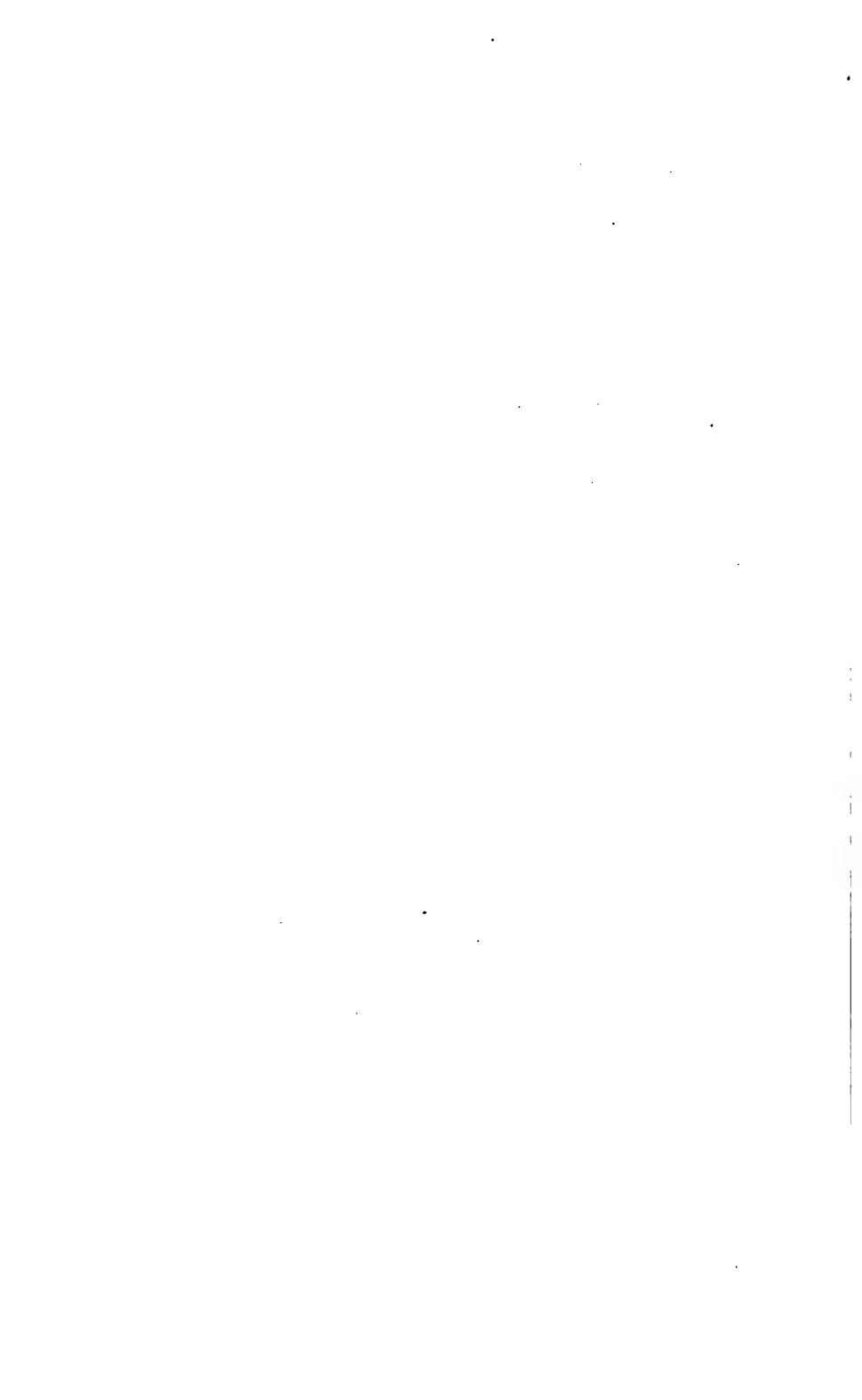
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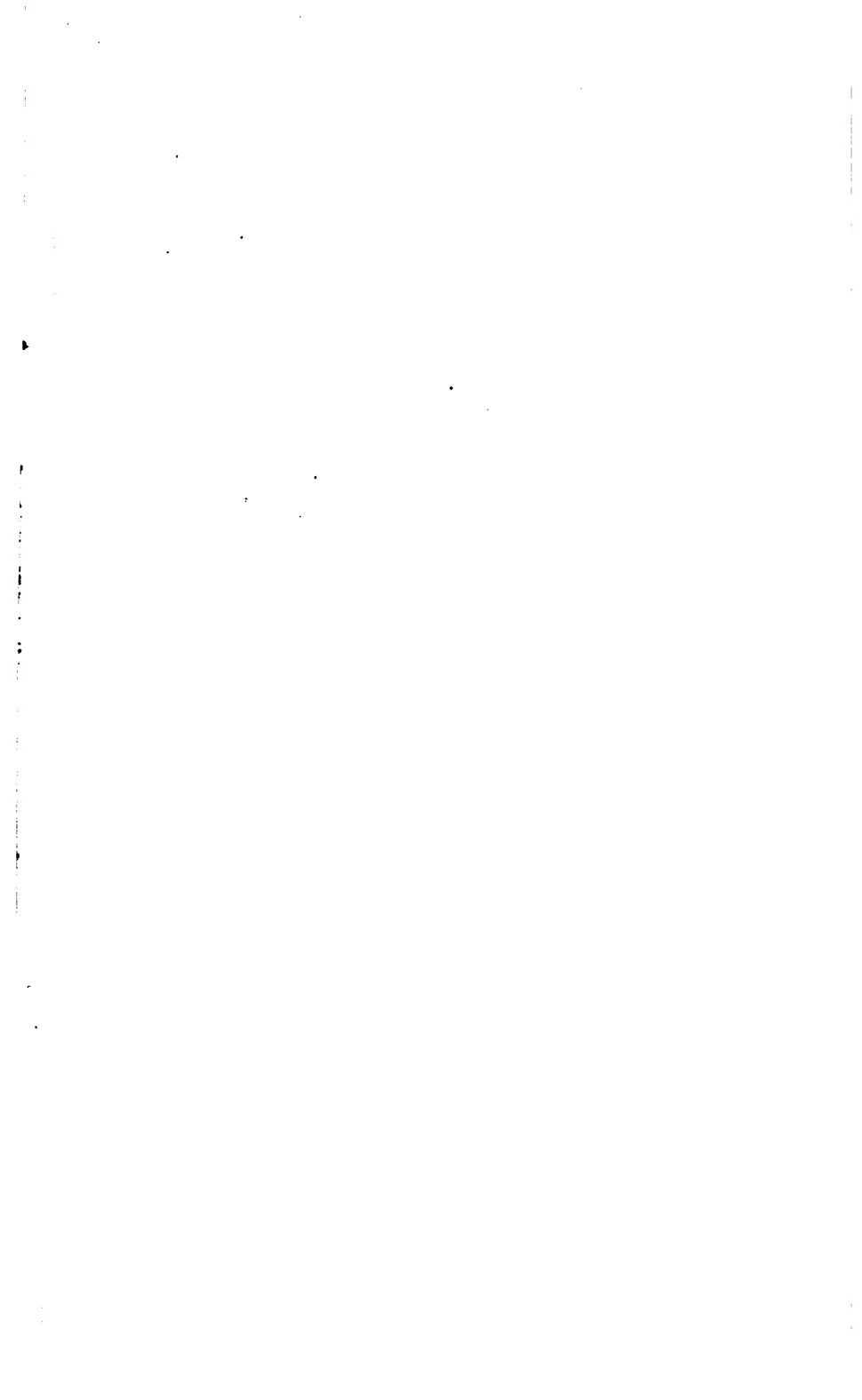
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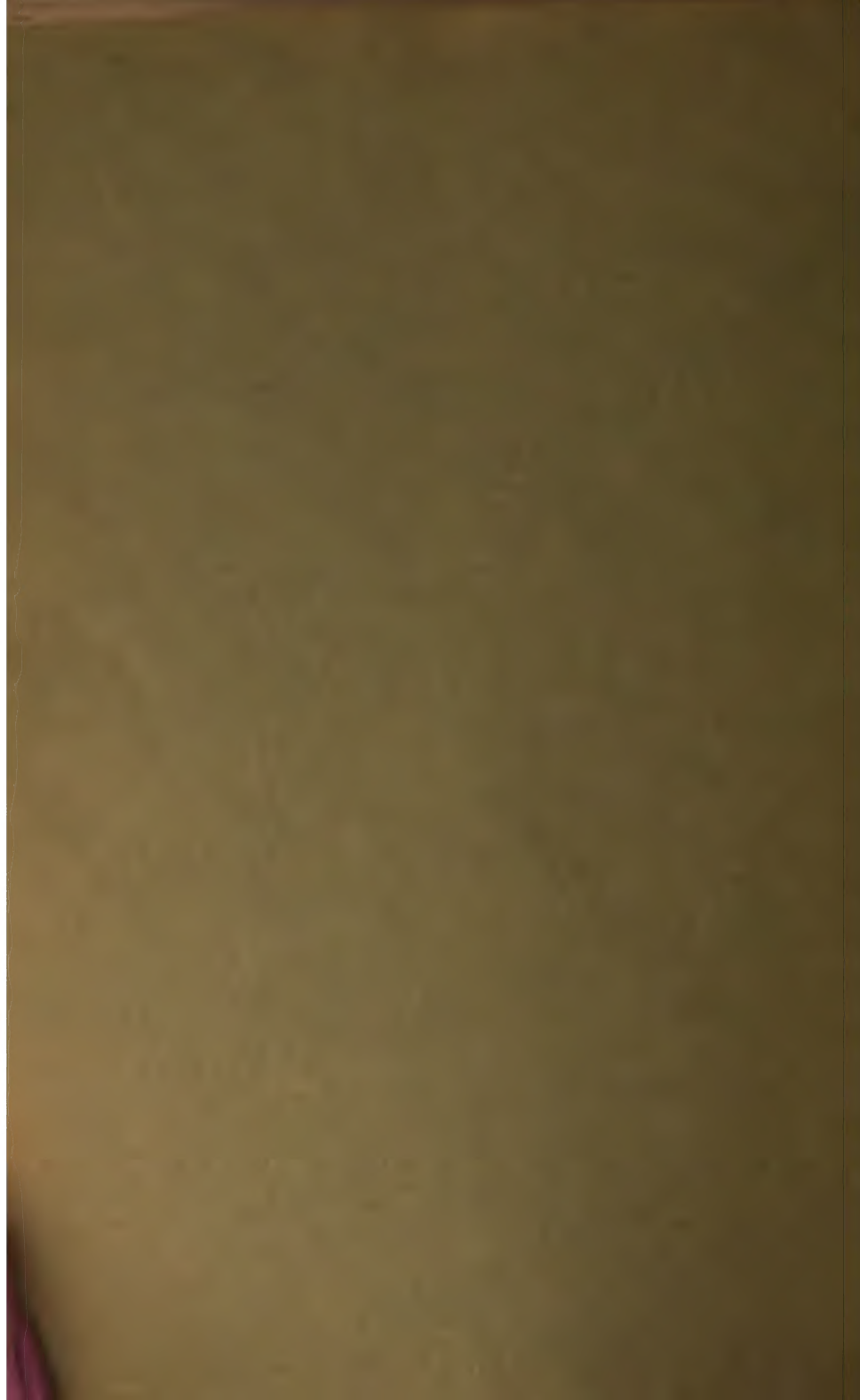
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